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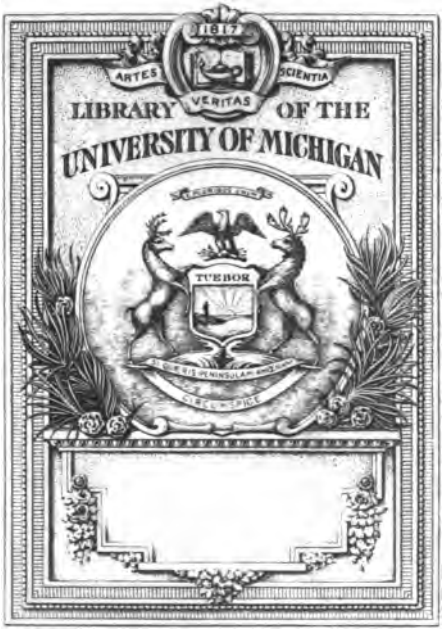
The Wrack of the Storm

Maurice Maeterlinck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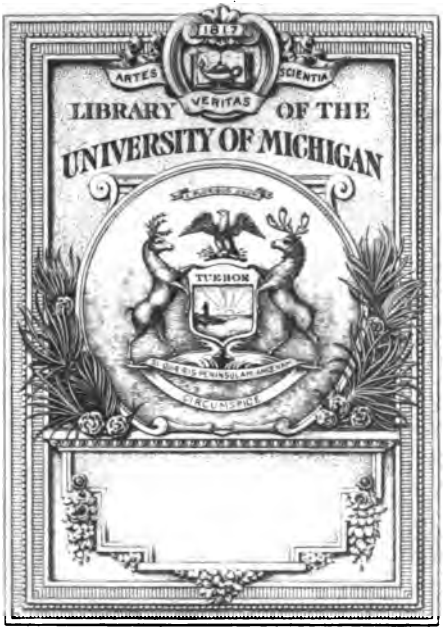
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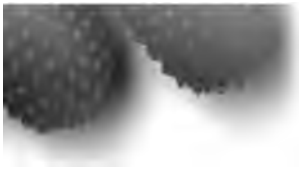

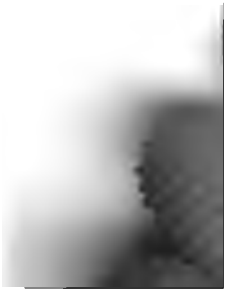

THE WRACK OF THE STORM

THE WORKS OF MAURICE MAETERLINCK

ESSAYS

THE TREASURE OF THE HUMBLE
WISDOM AND DESTINY
THE LIFE OF THE BEE
THE BURIED TEMPLE
THE DOUBLE GARDEN
THE MEASURE OF THE HOURS
ON EMERSON, AND OTHER ESSAYS
OUR ETERNITY
THE UNKNOWN GUEST
THE WRACK OF THE STORM
MOUNTAIN PATHS

PLAYS

SISTER BEATRICE, AND ARDIANE AND BARBE BLEUE
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THE BLUE BIRD, A FAIRY PLAY
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PÉLLÉAS AND MÉLISANDE, AND OTHER PLAYS
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POEMS

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OUR FRIEND THE DOG
THE SWARM
DEATH
THOUGHTS FROM MAETERLINCK
THE BLUE BIRD
THE LIFE OF THE BEE
NEWS OF SPRING AND OTHER NATURE STUDIES
THE LIGHT BEYOND

The Wrack of the Storm

By

Maurice Maeterlinck

Translated by

Alexander Teixeira de Mattos

New York
Dodd, Mead and Company
Publishers

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AUTHOR'S PREFACE

THE reader taking up this volume will, for the first time in the work of one who hitherto had cursed no man, find words of hatred and malediction. I would gladly have avoided them, for I hold that he who takes upon himself to write pledges himself to say nothing that can derogate from the respect and love which we owe to all men. I have had to utter these words; and I am as much surprised as saddened at what I have been constrained to say by the force of events and of truth. I loved Germany and numbered friends there, who now, dead or living, are alike dead to me. I thought her great and upright and generous; and to me she was ever kindly and hospitable. But there are crimes that obliterate the past and close the future. In re-

jecting hatred I should have shown myself a traitor to love.

I tried to lift myself above the fray; but, the higher I rose, the more I saw of the madness and the horror of it, of the justice of one cause and the infamy of the other. It is possible that one day, when time has wearied remembrance and restored the ruins, wise men will tell us that we were mistaken and that our standpoint was not lofty enough; but they will say it because they will no longer know what we know, nor will they have seen what we have seen.

MAURICE MAETERLINCK.

NICE, 1916.

TRANSLATOR'S NOTE

THE present volume contains, in the chronological order in which they were produced, all the essays published and all the speeches delivered by M. Maeterlinck since the beginning of the war, upon which, as will be perceived, each one of them has a direct bearing. They are printed as written; and they throw an interesting light upon the successive phases of the author's psychology during the Titanic and hideous struggle that has affected the mental attitude of us all.

In Italy forms the preface to M. Jules Destrée's book, *En Italie avant la guerre, 1914-15*. Of the remaining essays, some have appeared in various English and American periodicals; others are now printed in translation for the first time.

Translator's Note

I have also had M. Maeterlinck's leave to include in this volume his first published work, *The Massacre of the Innocents.* This powerful sketch in the Flemish manner saw the light originally in the *Plëiade,* in 1886, and may at the present time, to use the author's own words in a note to myself, be regarded as "a sort of vague symbolic prophecy." An English version by Mrs. Edith Wingate Rinder was printed in the *Dome* in 1899; another has since been issued by an English and by an American firm of publishers; but the only authorized translation to appear in book form is that now added as an epilogue to *The Wrack of the Storm.*

ALEXANDER TEIXEIRA DE MATTOS.

CHELSEA, 1916.

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AFTER THE VICTORY

THE WRACK OF THE STORM

I

AFTER THE VICTORY[1]

1

AT THESE moments of tragedy, none should be allowed to speak who cannot shoulder a rifle, for the written word seems so monstrously useless, so overwhelmingly trivial, in front of this mighty drama which shall for a long time, it may be for ever, free mankind from the scourge of war: the one scourge among all that cannot be excused, that cannot be explained, since alone among all it issues entire from the hands of man.

2

But it is while this scourge is upon us, while we have our being in its very centre,

[1]Translated by Alfred Sutro.

that we shall do well to balance the guilt of those who have committed this inexpiable crime. It is now, while we are in the thick of the horror, undergoing it, feeling it, that we have the energy, the clear-sightedness needed to judge it; from the depths of the most fearful injustice justice is best perceived. When the hour shall have come for settling accounts—and it will not long delay—we shall have forgotten much of what we have suffered and a blameworthy pity will creep over us and cloud our eyes. This is the moment, therefore, for us to frame our inexorable resolution. After the final victory, when the enemy is crushed—as crushed he will be—efforts will be made to enlist our sympathy, to move us to pity. We shall be told that the unfortunate German people were merely the victims of their monarch and their feudal caste; that no blame attaches to the Germany we know, which is so sym-

pathetic and so cordial—the Germany of quaint old houses and open-hearted greeting, the Germany that sits under its lime-trees beneath the clear light of the moon—but only to Prussia, hateful, arrogant Prussia; that the homely, peace-loving, Bavarian, the genial and hospitable dwellers on the banks of the Rhine, the Silesian and Saxon and I know not who besides—for all these will suddenly have become whiter than snow and more inoffensive than the sheep in an English fold—that they all have merely obeyed, have been compelled to obey orders which they detested but were unable to resist. We are face to face with reality now; let us look at it well and pronounce our sentence; for this is the moment when we hold the proofs in our hands, when the elements of crime are hot before us and shout out the truth that soon will fade from our memory. Let us tell ourselves now, therefore, now, that all that

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we shall be told hereafter will be false; and let us unflinchingly adhere to what we decide at this moment, when the glare of the horror is on us

3

It is not true that in this gigantic crime there are innocent and guilty, or degrees of guilt. They stand on one level, all those who have taken part in it. The German from the North has no more special craving for blood and outrage than he from the South has special tenderness or pity. It is, very simply, the German, from one end of his country to the other, who stands revealed as a beast of prey which the firm will of our planet finally repudiates. We have here no wretched slaves dragged along by a tyrant king who alone is responsible. Nations have the government which they deserve, or rather, the government which they have is truly no more than the

magnified and public projection of the private morality and mentality of the nation. If eighty million innocent people select and support a monstrous king, those eighty million innocent people merely expose the inherent falseness and superficiality of their innocence; and it is the monster they maintain at their head who stands for all that is true in their nature, because it is he who represents the eternal aspirations of their race, which lie far deeper than their apparent and transient virtues. Let there be no suggestion of error, of having been led astray, of an intelligent people having been tricked or misled. No nation can be deceived that does not wish to be deceived; and it is not intelligence that Germany lacks. In the sphere of intellect such things are not possible; nor in the region of enlightened, reflecting will. No nation permits herself to be coerced to the one crime that man cannot pardon. It is of her own

accord that she hastens towards it; her chief has no need to persuade, it is she who urges him on.

4

We have forces here quite different from those on the surface, forces that are secret, irresistible and profound. It is these that we must judge, these that we must crush under our heel, once and for all; for they are the only ones that will not be improved or softened or brought into line by experience or progress, or even by the bitterest lesson. They are unalterable and immovable, their springs lie far beneath hope or influence; and they must be destroyed as we destroy a nest of wasps, since we know that these never can change into a nest of bees. And, even though individually and singly the Germans were all innocent and merely led astray, they would be none the less guilty in the mass. This is the

guilt that counts, that alone is actual and real, because it lays bare, underneath their superficial innocence, the subconscious criminality of all.

5

No influence can prevail on the unconscious or the subconscious. It never evolves. Let there come a thousand years of civilization, a thousand years of peace, with all possible refinements of art and education, the subconscious element of the German spirit, which is its unvarying element, will remain absolutely the same as it is to-day and would declare itself, when the opportunity came, under the same aspect, with the same infamy. Through the whole course of history, two distinct will-powers have been noticed that would seem to be the opposed, elemental manifestations of the spirit of our globe, the one seeking only evil, injustice, tyranny and suf-

fering, while the other strives for liberty, the right, radiance and joy. These two powers stand once again face to face; our opportunity is now to annihilate the one that comes from below. Let us know how to be pitiless that we may have no more need for pity. It is a measure of organic defence. It is essential that the modern world should stamp out Prussian militarism as it would stamp out a poisonous fungus that for half a century had disturbed and polluted its days. The health of our planet is in question. To-morrow the United States of Europe will have to take measures for the convalescence of the earth.

KING ALBERT

II

KING ALBERT

I

OF all the heroes of this stupendous war, heroes who will live in the memory of man, one assuredly of the most unsullied, one of those whom we can never love enough, is the great young king of my little country.

He was indeed at the critical hour the appointed man, the man for whom every heart was waiting. With sudden beauty he embodied the mighty voice of his people. He stood, upon the moment, for Belgium, revealed unto herself and unto others. He had the wonderful good fortune to realize and bestow a conscience in one of those dread hours of tragedy and perplexity when the best of consciences waver.

Had he not been at hand, there is no doubt but that all would have happened differently; and history would have lost one of her fairest and noblest pages. Certainly Belgium would have been loyal and true to her word; and any government would have been swept away, pitilessly and irresistibly, by the indignation of a people that had never, however far we probe into the past, played false. But there would have been much of that confusion and irresolution inevitable in a host suddenly threatened with disaster. There would have been vain talking, mistaken measures, excusable but irreparable vacillations; and, above all, the much-needed words, the precise and final words, would not have been spoken and the deeds, than which we can picture none more resolute, none greater, would not have been done at the right moment.

Thanks to the king, the peerless act shines forth and is maintained complete,

unfaltering; and the path of heroism is straight and clearly defined and splendid as that of Thermopylae indefinitely extended.

2

But what he has suffered, what he suffers day by day only those can understand who have had the privilege of access to this hero: the most sensitive and the gentlest of men, silent and reserved; a man of controlled emotions, modest with a timidity that is at once baffling and delightful; loving his people less as a father loves his children than as a son loves his adoring mother. Of all that cherished kingdom, his pride and his joy, the seat of his happiness, the centre of his love and his security, there is left intact but a handful of cities, which are threatened at every moment by the foulest invader that the world has ever borne.

All the others—so quaint or so beautiful, so bright, so serene, happy to be there, so

inoffensive—jewels in the crown of Peace, models of pure and upright family life, homes of loyal and dutiful industry, of ready, ever-smiling geniality, with the natural welcome, the ever-proffered hand and the ever-open heart: all the others are dead cities, of which not one stone is left upon another; and the very country-side, one of the fairest in this world, with its gentle pastures, is now no more than one vast field of horror.

Treasures have perished that were numbered among the noblest and dearest possessions of mankind; monuments have disappeared which nothing can replace; and the half of a nation, among all nations the most attached to its old simple habits, its humble homes, is at present wandering along the roads of Europe. Thousands of innocent people have been massacred; and of those who remain nearly all are doomed to poverty and hunger.

But that remainder has but one soul, which has taken refuge in the spacious soul of its king. Not a murmur, not a word of reproach! But yesterday a town of thirty thousand inhabitants received the order to forsake its white houses, its churches, its ancient streets and squares, the scene of a light-hearted and industrious life. The thirty thousand inhabitants, women and children and old men, set forth to seek an uncertain refuge in a neighbouring city, which is threatened almost as directly as their own and which to-morrow, it may be, must in its turn set forth, but whither none can say, for the country is so small that its boundaries are quickly reached, its shelter soon exhausted.

No matter: they obey in silence and one and all approve and bless their sovereign. He did what had to be done, what every one in his place would have done; and, though they are all suffering as no people

has suffered since the barbarous invasions of the earliest ages, they know that he suffers more than any of them, for in him all their sorrows find a goal; in him they are reflected and enhanced. They do not even harbour the idea that they might have been saved by a sacrifice of honour. They draw no distinction between duty and destiny. To them that duty, with its frightful consequences, seems as inevitable as a natural force against which we cannot even dream of struggling, so great is it and so invincible.

3

Here is an example of the collective bravery of nameless heroes, an ingenuous and almost unconscious courage, which rivals and at times exceeds the most exalted deeds in legend and history, for since the days of the great martyrs men have never suffered death more simply for a simple idea.

And, if amid the anguish of our struggle it were seemly to speak of aught but tears and lamentations, we should find a magnificent consolation in the spectacle of the unexpected heroism that suddenly surrounds us on every side. It may well be said that never in the memory of mankind have men sacrificed their lives with such zest, such self-abnegation, such enthusiasm; and that the immortal virtues which to this day have uplifted and preserved the flower of the human race have never shone more brilliantly, never manifested greater power, energy or youth.

THE HOSTAGE CITIES

III

THE HOSTAGE CITIES

I

THANKS to the heroism of the Allies, the hour is approaching when the hordes of William the Madman will quit the soil of afflicted Belgium.

After what they have done in cold blood, what excesses, what disasters must we not expect of the last convulsions of their rage? Our anguish is all the more poignant in that they are at this moment fighting in the most ancient and most precious portion of Flanders. Above all countries, this is historic and hallowed land. They have destroyed Termonde, Roulers, Charleroi, Mons, Namur, Thielt and more besides; happy, charming little towns, which will rise again from their ashes, more beautiful than be-

fore. They have annihilated Louvain and Malines; they have but lately levelled Dixmude; their torches, their incendiary squirts and their bombs are about to attack Brussels, Antwerp, Ghent, Bruges, Ypres and Furnes, which are like so many living museums, forming one of the most delightful, delicate and fragile ornaments of Europe. The things which are beginning here and which may be completed would be irreparable. They would mean a loss to our race for which nothing could atone. A quite peculiar aspect—familiar, kindly, racy of the soil and unique—of that beauty which a long series of comely human lives is able to acquire and to hoard would disappear for ever from the face of the earth; and we cannot, in the trouble and confusion of these too tragic hours, realize the extent, the meaning or the consequences of such a crime.

Hostage Cities

2

We have made every sacrifice without complaining; but this would exceed all measure. What can be done? How are we to stop them? They seem to be no longer accessible to reason or to any of the feelings which men hold in honour; they are sensible only to blows. Very soon, as they must know, we shall have the power to strike them shrewdly. Why do not the Allies, this very day, swiftly, while yet there is time, name so many hostage cities, which would be answerable, stone for stone, for the existence of our own dear towns? If Brussels, for example, should be destroyed, then Berlin should be razed to the ground. If Antwerp were devastated, Hamburg would disappear. Nuremburg would guarantee Bruges; Munich would stand surety for Ghent.

At the present moment, when they are feeling the wind of defeat that blows

through their tattered standard, it is possible that this solemn threat, officially pronounced, would force them to reflect, if indeed they are still at all capable of reflection. It is the only expedient that remains to us and there is no time to be lost. With certain adversaries the most barbarous threats are legitimate and necessary, for these threats speak the only language which they can understand. And our children must not one day be able to reproach us with not having attempted everything—even that which is most repugnant—to save the treasures which are theirs by right.

TO SAVE FOUR CITIES

IV

TO SAVE FOUR CITIES

I

FIRST Louvain, Malines, Termonde, Lierre, Dixmude, Nieuport (and I am speaking only of the disasters of Flanders); now Ypres is no more and Furnes is half in ruins. By the side of the great Flemish cities, Brussels, Antwerp, Ghent and Bruges, those vast and incomparable living museums which have been watchfully preserved by a whole people, a people above all others attached to its traditions, they formed a constellation of little towns, delightful and hospitable, too little known to travellers. Each of them wore its own expression, of peace, pleasantness, innocent mirth, or meditation. Each possessed its treasures, jealously guarded: its belfries, its churches, its canals, its old bridges, its

quiet convents, its ancient houses, which gave it a special physiognomy, never to be forgotten by those who had beheld it.

But the indisputable queen of these beautiful forsaken cities was Ypres, with its enormous market-place, bordered by little dwelling-houses with stepped gables, and its prodigious market-buildings, which occupied one whole side of the immense oblong. This market-place haunted for ever the memory of those who had seen it, were it but once, while waiting to change trains; it was so unexpected, so magical, so dream-like almost, in its disproportion to the rest of the town. While the ancient city, whose life had withdrawn itself from century to century, was gradually shrinking all around it, the Grand'Place itself remained an immovable, gigantic, magnificent witness to the might and opulence of old, when Ypres was, with Ghent and Bruges, one of the three queens of the western

world, one of the most strenuous centres of human industry and activity and the cradle of our great liberties. Such as it was yesterday—alas, that I cannot say, such as it is to-day!—this square, with the enormous but unspeakably harmonious mass of those market-buildings, at once powerful and graceful, wild, gloomy, proud, yet genial, was one of the most wonderful and perfect spectacles that could be seen in any town on this old earth of ours. While of a different order of architecture, built of other elements and standing under sterner skies, it should have been as precious to man, as sacred and as intangible as the Piazza di San Marco at Venice, the Signoria at Florence or the Piazza del Duomo at Pisa. It constituted a peerless specimen of art, which at all times wrung a cry of admiration from the most indifferent, an ornament which men hoped was imperishable, one of those things

of beauty which, in the words of the poet, are a joy forever.

2

I cannot believe that it no longer exists; and yet in this horrible war we have to believe everything and, above all, the worst. Now, fatally and inevitably, it will be the turn of the Belfry of Bruges; and then the tide of barbarians will rise against Ghent and Antwerp and Brussels; and there will forthwith disappear one of those portions of the world's surface in which was hoarded the greatest wealth of beauty and of memories and of the stuff of history. We did what we could to preserve it; we could do no more. The most heroic of armies are powerless to prevent the bandits whom they are driving back from murdering the women and children or from deliberately and uselessly destroying all that they find along their path of retreat. There is only

one hope left us: the immediate and imperious intervention of the neutral powers. It is towards them that we turn our tortured gaze. Two great nations notably—Italy and the United States—hold in their hands the fate of these last treasures, whose loss would one day be reckoned among the heaviest and the most irreparable that have been suffered in the course of long centuries of human civilization. They can do what they will; it is time for them to do that which it is no longer lawful to leave undone. By its frantic lies, the beast from over the Rhine, standing at bay and in peril of death, shows plainly enough the importance which it attaches to the opinion of the only nations which the execration of all that lives and breathes have not yet armed against it. It is afraid. It feels that all is crumbling under foot, that it is being shunned and abandoned. It seeks in every direction a glance that does not curse it. It must not, it shall not find that glance.

The Wrack of the Storm

It is not necessary to tell Italy what our imperilled cities are worth; for Italy is preeminently the land of noble cities.

Our cause is her cause; she owes us her support. When a work of beauty is destroyed, her own genius and her own eternal gods are outraged. As for America, she more than any other country stands for the future. She should think of the days that will follow after this war. When the great peace descends upon the earth, let not the earth be found desert and robbed of all its jewels. The places at which the earth is beautiful because of centuries of effort, because of the successful zeal and patience and genius of a race, are not so many. This corner of Flanders, over which death now hovers, is one of those consecrated spots. Were it to perish, men as yet unborn, men who at last, perhaps, will achieve happiness, would lack memories and examples which nothing could replace.

PRO PATRIA: I

V

PRO PATRIA: I[1]

I

I NEED not here recall the events that hurled Belgium into the depths of distress most glorious where she is struggling to-day. She has been punished as never nation was punished for doing her duty as never nation did before. She saved the world while knowing that she could not be saved. She saved it by flinging herself in the path of the oncoming barbarians, by allowing herself to be trampled to death in order to give the defenders of justice time, not to rescue her, for she was well aware that rescue could not come in time, but to collect the forces needed to save our Latin civilization from the greatest dan-

[1] Delivered at the Scala Theatre, Milan, 30 November, 1914.

ger that has ever threatened it. She has thus done this civilization, which is the only one whereunder the majority of men are willing or able to live, a service exactly similar to that which Greece, at the time of the great Asiatic invasions, rendered to the mother of this civilization. But, while the service is similar, the act surpasses all comparison. We may ransack history in vain for aught to approach it in grandeur. The magnificent sacrifice at Thermopylæ, which is perhaps the noblest action in the annals of war, is illumined with an equally heroic but less ideal light, for it was less disinterested and more material. Leonidas and his three hundred Spartans were in fact defending their homes, their wives, their children, all the realities which they had left behind them. King Albert and his Belgians, on the other hand, knew full well that, in barring the invader's road, they were inevitably sacrificing their homes,

their wives and their children. Unlike the heroes of Sparta, instead of possessing an imperative and vital interest in fighting, they had everything to gain by not fighting and nothing to lose—save honour. In the one scale were fire and the sword, ruin, massacre, the infinite disaster which we see; in the other was that little word honour, which also represents infinite things, but things which we do not see, or which we must be very pure and very great to see quite clearly. It has happened now and again in history that a man standing higher than his fellows perceives what this word represents and sacrifices his life and the life of those whom he loves to what he perceives; and we have not without reason devoted to such men a sort of cult that places them almost on a level with the gods. But what had never yet happened—and I say this without fear of contradiction from whosoever cares to search the memory of

man—is that a whole people, great and small, rich and poor, learned and ignorant, deliberately immolated itself thus for the sake of an unseen thing.

2

And observe that we are not discussing one of those heroic resolutions which are taken in a moment of enthusiasm, when man easily surpasses himself, and which have not to be maintained when, forgetting his intoxication, he lapses on the morrow to the dead level of his everyday life. We are concerned with a resolution that has had to be taken and maintained every morning, for now nearly four months, in the midst of daily increasing distress and disaster. And not only has this resolution not wavered by a hair's breadth, but it grows as steadily as the national misfortune; and to-day, when this misfortune is reaching its full, the national resolution is

likewise attaining its zenith. I have seen many, of my refugee fellow-countrymen: some used to be rich and had lost their all; others were poor before the war and now no longer owned even what the poorest own. I have received many letters from every part of Europe where duty's exiles had sought a brief instant of repose. In them there was lamentation, as was only too natural, but not a reproach, not a regret, not a word of recrimination. I did not once come upon that hopeless but excusable cry which, one would think, might so easily have sprung from despairing lips:

"If our king had not done what he did, we should not be suffering what we are suffering to-day."

The idea does not even occur to them. It is as though this thought were not of those which can live in that atmosphere purified by misfortune. They are not resigned, for to be resigned means to renounce

the strife, no longer to keep up one's courage. They are proud and happy in their distress. They have a vague feeling that this distress will regenerate them after the manner of a baptism of faith and glory and ennoble them for all time in the remembrance of men. An unexpected breath, coming from the secret reserves of the human race and from the summits of the human heart, has suddenly passed over their lives and given them a single soul, formed of the same heroic substance as that of their great king.

3

They have done what had never before been done; and it is to be hoped for the happiness of mankind that no nation will ever again be called upon for a like sacrifice. But this wonderful example will not be lost, even though there be no longer any occasion to imitate it. At a time when

the universal conscience seemed about to bend under the weight of long prosperity and selfish materialism, suddenly it raised by several degrees what we may term the political morality of the world and lifted it all at once to a height which it had not yet reached and from which it will never again be able to descend, for there are actions so glorious, actions which fill so great a place in our memory, that they found a sort of new religion and definitely fix the limits of the human conscience and of human loyalty and courage.

They have really, as I have already said and as history will one day establish with greater eloquence and authority than mine, they have really saved Latin civilization. They had stood for centuries at the junction of two powerful and hostile forms of culture. They had to choose and they did not hesitate. Their choice was all the more significant, all the more instructive,

inasmuch as none was so well qualified as they to choose with a full knowledge of what they were doing. You are all aware that more than half of Belgium is of Teutonic stock. She was therefore, thanks to her racial affinities, better able than any other to understand the culture that was being offered her, together with the imputation of dishonour which it included. She understood it so well that she rejected it with an outbreak of horror and disgust unparalleled in violence, spontaneous, unanimous and irresistible, thus pronouncing a verdict from which there was no appeal and giving the world a peremptory lesson sealed with every drop of her blood.

4

But to-day she is at the end of her resources. She has exhausted not her courage but her strength. She has paid with all that she possesses for the immense ser-

vice which she has rendered to mankind. Thousands and thousands of her children are dead; all her riches have perished; almost all her historic memories, which were her pride and her delight, almost all her artistic treasures, which were numbered among the fairest in this world, are destroyed for ever. She is nothing more than a desert whence stand out, more or less intact, four great towns alone, four towns which the Rhenish hordes, for whom the epithet of barbarians is in point of fact too honourable, appear to have spared only so that they may keep back one last and monstrous revenge for the day of the inevitable rout. It is certain that Antwerp, Ghent, Bruges and Brussels are doomed beyond recall. In particular, the admirable Grand'place, the Hôtel de Ville and the Cathedral at Brussels are, I know, undermined: I repeat, I know it from private and trustworthy testimony against which

no denial can prevail. A spark will be enough to turn one of the recognized marvels of Europe into a heap of ruins like those of Ypres, Malines and Louvain. Soon after—for, short of immediate intervention, the disaster is as certain as though it were already accomplished—Bruges, Antwerp and Ghent will suffer the same fate; and in a moment, as I was saying the other day, there will vanish from sight one of the corners of this earth in which the greatest store of memories, of historic matter and artistic beauties had been accumulated.

5

The time has come to end this foolery! The time has come for everything that draws breath to rise up against these systematic, insane and stupid acts of destruction, perpetrated without any military excuse or strategic object. The reason why we are at last uttering a great cry of dis-

tress, we who are above all a silent people, the reason why we turn to your mighty and noble country is that Italy is to-day the only European power that is still in a position to stop the unchained brute on the brink of his crime. You are ready. You have but to stretch out a hand to save us. We have not come to beg for our lives: these no longer count with us and we have already offered them up. But, in the name of the last beautiful things that the barbarians have left us, we come with our prayers to the land of all beautiful things. It must not be, it shall not be that, on the day when at last we return, not to our homes, for most of these are destroyed, but to our native soil, that soil is so laid waste as to have become an unrecognizable desert. You know better than any others what memories mean, what masterpieces mean to a nation, for your country is covered with memories and masterpieces. It

is also the land of justice and the cradle of the law, which is simply justice that has taken cognizance of itself. On this account, Italy owes us justice. And she owes it to herself to put a stop to the greatest iniquity in the annals of history, for not to put a stop to it when one has the power is almost tantamount to taking part in it. It is for Italy as much as for France that we have suffered. She is the source, she is the very mother of the ideal for which we have fought and for which the last of our soldiers are still fighting in the last of our trenches.

HEROISM

VI

HEROISM

I

ONE of the consoling surprises of this war is the unlooked-for and, so to speak, universal heroism which it has revealed among all the nations taking part in it.

We were rather inclined to believe that courage, physical and moral fortitude, self-denial, stoicism, the renunciation of every sort of comfort, the faculty of self-sacrifice and the power of facing death belonged only to the more primitive, the less happy, the less intelligent nations, to the nations least capable of reasoning, of appreciating danger and of picturing in their imagination the dreadful abyss that separates this life from the life unknown. We were even

almost persuaded that war would one day cease for lack of soldiers, that is to say, of men foolish enough or unhappy enough to risk the only absolute realities—health, physical comfort, an unimpaired body and, above all, life, the greatest of earthly possessions—for the sake of an ideal which, like all ideals, is more or less invisible.

And this argument seemed the more natural and convincing because, as existence grew gentler and men's nerves more sensitive, the means of destruction by war showed themselves more cruel, ruthless and irresistible. It seemed more and more probable that no man would ever again endure the infernal horrors of a battlefield and that, after the first slaughter, the opposing armies, officers and men alike, all seized with insuppressible panic, would turn their backs upon one another, in simultaneous, supernatural affright, and flee from unearthly terrors exceeding the most

monstrous anticipations of those who had let them loose.

2

To our great astonishment the very opposite is now proclaimed.

We realize with amazement that until to-day we had but an incomplete and inaccurate conception of man's courage. We looked upon it as an exceptional virtue and one which is the more admired as being also the rarer the farther we go back in history. Remember, for instance, Homer's heroes, the ancestors of all the heroes of our day. Study them closely. These models of antiquity, the first professors, the first masters of bravery, are not really very brave. They have a wholesome dread of being hit or wounded and an ingenuous and manifest fear of death. Their mighty conflicts are declamatory and decorative but not so very bloody; they inflict more noise than pain upon their ad-

versaries, they deliver many more words than blows. Their defensive weapons—and this is characteristic—are greatly superior to their arms of offence; and death is an unusual, unforeseen and almost indecorous event which throws the ranks into disorder and most often puts a stop to the combat or provokes a headlong flight that seems quite natural. As for the wounds, these are enumerated and described, sung and deplored as so many remarkable phenomena. On the other hand, the most discreditable routs, the most shameful panics are frequent; and the old poet relates them, without condemning them, as ordinary incidents to be ascribed to the gods and inevitable in any warfare.

This kind of courage is that of all antiquity, more or less. We will not linger over it, nor delay to consider the battles of the Middle Ages or the Renascence, in which the fiercest hand-to-hand encounters

of the mercenaries often left not more than half-a-dozen victims on the field. Let us rather come straight to the great wars of the Empire. Here the courage displayed begins to resemble our own, but with notable differences. In the first place, those concerned were solely professionals. We see not a whole nation fighting, but a delegation, a martial selection, which, it is true, becomes gradually more extensive, but never, as in our time, embraces every man between eighteen and fifty years of age capable of shouldering a weapon. Again —and above all—every war was reduced to two or three pitched battles, that is to say, two or three culminating moments; immense efforts, but efforts of a few hours, or a day at most, towards which the combatants directed all the vigour and all the heroism accumulated during long weeks or months of preparation and waiting. Afterwards, whether the result was

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victory or defeat, the fighting was over; relaxation, respite and rest followed; men went back to their homes. Destiny must not be defied more than once; and they knew that in the most terrible affray the chances of escaping death were as twenty to one.

3

Nowadays, everything is changed; and death itself is no longer what it was. Formerly, you looked it in the face, you knew whence it came and who sent it to you. It had a dreadful aspect, but one that remained human. Its ways were not unknown: its long spells of sleep, its brief awakenings, its bad days and dangerous hours. At present, to all these horrors it adds the great, intolerable fear of mystery. It no longer has any aspect, no longer has habits or spells of sleep and it is never still. It is always ready, always on the watch, everywhere present, scattered, intangible

and dense, stealthy and cowardly, diffuse, all-encompassing, innumerous, looming at every point of the horizon, rising from the waters and falling from the skies, indefatigable, inevitable, filling the whole of space and time for days, weeks and months without a minute's lull, without a second's intermission. Men live, move and sleep in the meshes of its fatal web. They know that the least step to the right or left, a head bowed or lifted, a body bent or upright is seen by its eyes and draws its thunder.

Hitherto we had no example of this preponderance of the destructive forces. We should never have believed that man's nerves could resist so great a trial. The nerves of the bravest man are tempered to face death for the space of a second, but not to live in the hourly expectation of death and nothing else. Heroism was once a sharp and rugged peak, reached for

a moment but soon quitted, for mountain-peaks are not inhabitable. To-day it is a boundless plain, as uninhabitable as the peaks; but we are not permitted to descend from it. And so, at the very moment when man appeared most exhausted and enervated by the comforts and vices of civilization, at the moment when he was happiest and therefore most selfish, when, possessing the minimum of faith and vainly seeking a new ideal, he seemed least capable of sacrificing himself for an idea of any kind, he finds himself suddenly confronted with an unprecedented danger, which he is almost certain that the most heroic nations of history would not have faced nor even dreamed of facing, whereas he does not even dream that it is possible to do aught but face it. And let it not be said that we had no choice, that the danger and the struggle were thrust upon us, that we had to defend ourselves or die and that in

such cases there are no cowards. It is not true: there was, there always has been, there still is a choice.

4

It is not man's life that is at stake, but the idea which he forms of the honour, the happiness and the duties of his life. To save his life he had but to submit to the enemy; the invader would not have exterminated him. You cannot exterminate a great people; it is not even possible to enslave it seriously or to inflict great sorrow upon it for long. He had nothing to be afraid of except disgrace. He did not so much as see the infamous temptation appear above the horizon of his most instinctive fears; he does not even suspect that it is able to exist; and he will never perceive it, whatever sacrifices may yet await him. We are not, therefore, speaking of a heroism that would be but the last

resource of despair, the heroism of the animal driven to bay and fighting blindly to delay death's coming for a moment. No, it is heroism freely donned, deliberately and unanimously hailed, heroism on behalf of an idea and a sentiment, in other words, heroism in its clearest, purest and most virginal form, a disinterested and whole-hearted sacrifice for that which men regard as their duty to themselves, to their kith and kin, to mankind and to the future. If life and personal safety were more precious than the idea of honour, of patriotism and of fidelity to tradition and the race, there was, I repeat, and there is still a choice to be made; and never perhaps in any war was the choice easier, for never did men feel more free, never indeed were they more free to choose.

But this choice, as I have said, did not dare show its faintest shadow on the lowest horizons of even the most ignoble con-

sciences. Are you quite sure that, in other times which we think better and more virtuous than our own, men would not have seen it, would not have spoken of it? Can you find a nation, even among the greatest, which, after six months of a war compared with which all other wars seem child's-play, of a war which threatens and uses up all that nation's life and all its possessions, can you find, I say, in history, not an instance—for there is no instance—but some similar case which allows you to presume that the nation would not have faltered, would not at least, were it but for a second, have looked down and cast its eyes upon an inglorious peace?

5

Nevertheless, they seemed much stronger than we are, all those who came before us. They were rude, austere, much closer to nature, poor and often unhappy. They

had a simpler and a more rigid code of thought; they had the habit of physical suffering, of hardship and of death. But I do not believe that any one dares contend that these men would have done what our soldiers are now doing, that they would have endured what is being endured all around us. Are we not entitled to conclude from this that civilization, contrary to what was feared, so far from enervating, depraving, weakening, lowering and dwarfing man, elevates him, purifies him, strengthens him, ennobles him, makes him capable of acts of sacrifice, generosity and courage which he did not know before? The fact is that civilization, even when it seems to entail corruption, brings intelligence with it and that intelligence, in days of trial, stands for potential pride, nobility and heroism. That, as I said in the beginning, is the unexpected and consoling revelation of this horrible war: we can rely

on man implicitly, place the greatest trust in him, nor fear lest, in laying aside his primitive brutality, he should lose his manly qualities. The greater his progress in the conquest of nature and the greater his apparent attachment to material welfare, the more does he become capable, nevertheless, unconsciously, deep down in the best part of him, of self-detachment and of self-sacrifice for the common safety and the more does he understand that he is nothing when he compares himself with the eternal life of his forbears and his children.

It was so great a trial that we dared not, before this war, have contemplated it. The future of the human race was at stake; and the magnificent response that comes to us from every side reassures us fully as to the issue of other struggles, more formidable still, which no doubt await us when it will be a question no longer of fighting our fellow-men, but rather of facing

the more powerful and cruel of the great mysterious enemies that nature holds in reserve against us. If it be true, as I believe, that humanity is worth just as much as the sum total of latent heroism which it contains, then we may declare that humanity was never stronger nor more exemplary than now and that it is at this moment reaching one of its highest points and capable of braving everything and hoping everything. And it is for this reason that, despite our present sadness, we are entitled to congratulate ourselves and to rejoice.

PRO PATRIA: II

VII

PRO PATRIA: II[1]

I

MORE than three months ago, I was in one of the grandest of your cities, a city that welcomed in a manner which I shall never forget the cause which I had come among you to represent. I was there, as I told my hearers at the time, in the name of the last remnants of beauty that the barbarians had left us, to plead with the land of every kind of beauty. Those threatened beauties, our only cities yet intact, the treasures and sanctuaries of our whole past and of all our race, are still reeling on the brink of the same abyss and, failing a miracle which we dare not hope for, they will suffer the fate of Ypres,

[1] Delivered in Rome, before the Associazione della Stampa, 13 March, 1915.

Louvain, Malines, Termonde, Dixmude and so many other less illustrious victims. The danger in which they stand has no doubt aroused the indignation of the civilized world; but not a hand has armed itself to defend them. I blame no one; I reproach no one; the morality of the nations is a virtue that has not yet emerged from the state of infancy; and fortunately, by the hazard of war, it is not yet too late to save four innocent cities.

To-day I have not come to speak of monuments, of historical relics, nor even of the wrongs committed, of the violation of all the rights and laws of warfare and every international convention, of incendiarism, pillage and massacre; I have come simply to utter before you the last distressful cry of a dying nation.

At this moment a tragedy is being enacted in Belgium such as has no precedent in the history of civilized peoples, nor

even in that of the barbarians, for the barbarians, when committing their most stupendous crimes, lacked the infernal deliberation and the scientific, all-powerful means of working evil which to-day are in the hands of those who profit by the resources and benefits of civilization only to turn them against it and to seek the annihilation of all its noblest and most generous characteristics. The despairing rumours of this tragedy come to us only through the chinks of that ensanguined well which isolates it from the rest of the world. Nothing reaches our ears but the lies of the enemy. In reality, the whole of Belgium is one huge Prussian prison, where every cry is cruelly and methodically stifled and where no voices are heard save those of the gaolers. Only now and again, after a thousand adventures, despite a thousand perils, a letter from some kinsman or captive friend arrives from

the depths of that great living cemetery, bringing us a gleam of authentic truth.

2

You are as familiar with this truth as I am. At the moment when her soil was invaded, Belgium numbered seven million seven hundred thousand inhabitants. It is estimated that between two hundred and fifty and three hundred thousand have perished in battle or massacre, or as the result of misery and privation; and I am not speaking of the infant children, the sacrifice of whom, owing to the dearth of milk, has, it appears, been frightful. Five or six hundred thousand unfortunates have fled to Holland, France or England. There remain therefore in the country nearly seven million inhabitants; and more than half of these seven millions are living almost exclusively on American charity.

Pro Patria: II

In what is above all an industrial country, producing normally, in time of peace, less than a third part of the wheat necessary for home consumption, the enemy has systematically requisitioned everything, carried off everything, for the upkeep of his armies, and has sent into Germany what he could not consume on the spot. The result of so monstrous a proceeding may readily be divined: on all that soil, once so happy and so rich, to-day taxed and pillaged and pillaged again, ravaged and devastated by fire and the sword, there is nothing left. And the situation of suffering Belgium is so cruelly paradoxical that her best friends, her dearest allies, even those whom she has saved, are powerless to succour her. Isolated as she is from the rest of the world, she would have starved even though nothing had been taken from her. Now she has been despoiled of all that she possessed, while France and Eng-

land can send her neither money nor provisions, for they would fall into the hands of those engaged in torturing her, so much so that every attempt on their part to alleviate her sufferings would but retard her deliverance still further. Did history ever witness a more poignant, a more desperate tragedy? It is a fact that in the midst of this war we are constantly finding ourselves confronted with events such as history hitherto has never beheld. A people resembling an enormous beast of prey, in order to punish a loyalty and heroism which, if it retained the slightest notion of justice and injustice, the smallest sense of human dignity and honour, it ought to worship on its knees: this vast predatory race stealthily resolved to exterminate an inoffensive little nation whose soul it felt was too great to be enslaved or reduced to the semblance of its conqueror's. It was on the point of suc-

ceeding, amid the silence, the impotence, or the terror of the world, when from beyond the Atlantic a generous nation took that heroic little people under its protection. It understood that what was involved was not merely an act of justice and elementary pity, but also and more particularly a higher duty towards the morality and the eternal conscience of mankind. Thanks to this great nation's intervention, it will not be said, in the days to come, that justice, loyalty, honesty and heroism are no more than dangerous illusions and a fool's bargain, or that evil must necessarily, at all times and places, conquer whenever it is backed by force, or that the only reward which duty magnificently done may hope to receive on this earth is every manner of grief and disaster, ending in death by starvation. So immense and triumphant an example of inquity would strike the ideals of mankind

a blow from which they would not recover for centuries.

3

But already this help is becoming exhausted; it cannot be indefinitely prolonged; and very soon it will be insufficient. It is, moreover, at the mercy of the slightest diplomatic or political complication; and its failure will be irreparable. It will mean utter famine, unexampled extermination, which till the end of the world will cry to heaven for vengeance. It is no longer a question of weeks or months, but one of days. That is where we stand; and these are the last hours granted by destiny to an inactive Europe wherein to expunge the shame of her indifference.

These hours belong almost solely to you, for others have not your power. Whatever may happen, however long you may postpone the issue, one of these days you

will be obliged to join in the fray. Everything advises, everything orders you to do so; and I can see nothing on the side of honour, justice or humanity, on the side of the will of the centuries or the human race, nor even on the side of prudence and self-interest, that allows you to avoid it. Is it not better and more worthy of yourselves than all the subtleties, plottings and petty bargainings of diplomacy?

The one hour, the peremptory hour has struck when your aid can break the balance between the powers of good and evil which, for more than two hundred days, have kept the future of Europe hanging over the abyss.

Fate has granted you the magnificent boon, the all but divine privilege, of saving from the most horrible of deaths four or five millions of innocent human beings, four or five millions of martyrs who have performed the finest action that a people could

perform and who are perishing because they defended the ideals which your fathers taught them. I know that we are faced by duties which until to-day had never entered into the morality of States; for it is but too true that this morality still lags a thousand miles behind that of the meanest peasant. But, if such a thing has never yet been done, it is all the more glorious to be the first to do it, to make an effort that will raise the life of nations to a level which the life of the individual has long since attained. And no people is better qualified than the Italian to make this effort which the world and the future are awaiting as a deliverance.

But I will say no more. I have been reproached for speaking of matters which, as a foreigner, I ought not to discuss. I believed that these great questions of humanity interested the whole human race. Perhaps I was wrong. I will respect the

profound silence in which great actions are developed; and I leave to the meditation of your hearts that which I am constrained to leave unsaid. They will tell you very much better than I could all that I had to say to you.

PRO PATRIA: III

VIII

PRO PATRIA: III[1]

I

ALTHOUGH nothing entitles me to the honour of addressing you in the name of my refugee countrymen, nevertheless it is only fitting, since a kindly insistence brings me here, that I should in the first place give thanks to England for the manner in which she welcomed them in their distress. I am but a voice in the crowd; and, if my words exceed the limits of this hall and lend to him who utters them an authority which he himself does not possess, it is only because they are filled with unbounded gratitude.

In this horrible war, whose stakes are the salvation and the future of mankind,

[1] Delivered in London, at the Queen's Hall, 7 July, 1915.

let us first of all salute our wonderful sister, France, who is supporting the heaviest burden and who, for more than eleven months, having broken its first and most formidable onslaught, has been struggling, foot by foot, at closest quarters, without faltering, without remission, with an heroic smile, against the most formidable organization of pillage, massacre and devastation that the world or hell itself has seen since man first learnt the history of the planet on which he lives. We have here a revelation of qualities and virtues surpassing all that we expected from a nation which nevertheless had accustomed us to expect of her all that goes to make the beauty and the glory of humanity. One must reside in France, as I have done for many years, to understand and admire as it deserves the incomparable lesson in courage, abnegation, firmness, determination, coolness, conscious dignity, self-mas-

tery, good-humour, chivalrous generosity and utter charity and self-sacrifice which this great and noble people, which has civilized more than half the globe, is at the present moment teaching the civilized world.

Let us also salute boundless Russia, with her wonderful soldiers, innocent and ingenuous as the saints of old, ignorant of fear as children who do not yet know the meaning of death. Yonder, along a formidable front running from the Baltic to the Black Sea, with silent multitudinous heroism, amid defeats which are but victories delayed, she is beginning the great work of our deliverance. Lastly let us greet Servia, small but prodigious, whom we must one day place on the summit of that monument of glory which Europe will raise to-morrow to the memory of those who have freed her from her chains.

So much for them. They have a right

to all our gratitude, to all our admiration. They are doing magnificently all that had to be done. But they occupy a place apart in duty's splendid hierarchy. They are the protagonists of direct, material, tangible, undeniable, inevitable duty. This war is their war. If they would not accept the worst of disgraces, if they were not prepared to suffer servitude, massacre, ruin and famine, they had to undertake it; they could not do otherwise. They were attacked by the born enemy, the irreducible and absolute enemy, of whom they knew enough to understand that they had nothing to expect from him but total and unremitting disaster. It was a question of their continued existence in this world. They had no choice; they had to defend themselves; and any other nation in their place would have done the same, only there are few who would have done it with the same spirit of self-abnegation, the same devotion,

the same perseverance, the same loyalty and the same smiling courage.

2

But for us Belgians—and we may say as much for you English—it was not a question of this kind of duty. The horrible drama did not concern us. It demanded only the right to pass us by without touching us; and, far from doing us any harm, it would have flooded us with the unclaimed riches which armies on the march drag in their wake. We Belgians in particular, peaceable, hospitable, inoffensive and almost unarmed, should, by the very treaties which assured our existence, have remained complete strangers to this war. To be sure, we loved France, because we knew her as well as we knew ourselves and because she makes herself beloved by all who know her. But we entertained no hatred of Germany. It is

true that, in spite of the virtues which we believed her to possess but which were merely the mask of a spy, our hearts barely responded to her obsequiously treacherous advances. For the German, of all the inhabitants of our planet, has this one and singular peculiarity, that he arouses in us, from the onset, a profound, instinctive, intuitive feeling of antipathy. But, even so and wherever our preferences may have lain, our treaties, our pledged word, the very reason of our existence, all forbade us to take part in the conflict. Then came the incredible ultimatum, the monstrous demand of which you know, which gave us twelve hours to choose between ruin and death or dishonour. As you also know, we did not need twelve hours to make our choice. This choice was no more than a cry of indignation and resolution, spontaneous, fierce and irresistible. We did not stay for a moment to ponder the extenua-

ting circumstances which our weakness might have invoked. We did not for a moment consider the absolution which history would have granted us later, on realizing that a conflict between forces so completely disproportioned was futile, that we must inevitably be crushed, massacred and annihilated and that the sacrifice of a little people in its entirety could prevent nothing, could barely cause delay and would have no weight in the immense balance into which the world's destinies were about to be flung. There was no question of all this; we saw one thing only: our plighted word. For that word we must die; and since then we have been dying. Trace the course of history as far back as you will; question the nations of the earth; then name those who have done or who would have done what we did. How many will you find? I am not judging those whom I pass over in silence, for to do so would

be to enter into the secret of men's hearts which I have not the right to violate; but in any case there is one which I can name aloud, without fear of being mistaken; and that is the British nation. This people too entered into the conflict, not through interest or necessity or inherited hatred, but simply for a matter of honour. It has not suffered what we have suffered; it has not risked what we have risked, which is all that we possessed beneath the arch of heaven; but it owes this immunity only to outside circumstances. The principle and the quality of the act are the same. We stand on the same plane, one step higher than the other combatants. While the others are the soldiers of necessity, we are the volunteers of honour; and, without detracting from their merits, this title adds to ours all that a pure and disinterested idea adds to the noblest acts of courage. There is not a doubt but that in our place

you would have done precisely what we did. You would have done it with the same simplicity, the same calm and confident ardour, the same good faith. You would have thrown yourselves into the breach as whole-heartedly, with the same scorn of useless phrases and the same stubborn conscientiousness. And the reason why I do not shrink from singing in your presence the praises of what we have done is that these praises also affect yourselves, who would not have hesitated to do the selfsame things.

3

In short, we have both the same conception of honour; and a like idea must needs bear like fruits. In your eyes as in ours, a formal promise, a word once given is the most sacred thing that can pass between man and man. Now far more than the valour of a man—because it rises to much

greater heights and extends to much greater distances—the valour of a people depends upon the conception of its honour which that people holds and, above all, upon the sacrifices which it is capable of making for the sake of that honour. We may differ upon all the other ideas that guide the actions of mankind, notably upon the religious idea; but those who do not agree on this one point are unworthy of the name of man. It represents the purest flame, the ever more ardent focus of all human dignity and virtue.

You have sacrificed yourselves wholly to this idea; and, in the name of this idea, which is as vital and as powerful in your souls as in ours, you came to our aid, as we knew that you would come, for we counted on you as surely as you counted on us. You are ready to make the same sacrifices; and already you are proudly supporting the heaviest of sacrifices. Thus,

in this stupendous struggle, we are united by bonds even more fraternal than those which bind the other Allies. Our union is more lofty and more generous, for it is based wholly upon the noblest thoughts and feelings that can inspire the heart. And this union, which is marked by a mutual confidence and affection that grow hourly deeper and wider, is helping us both to go even beyond our duty.

For we have gone beyond it; and we are exceeding it daily. We have done and are doing far more than we were bound to do. It was for us Belgians to resist, loyally, vigorously, to the utmost of our strength, as we had promised. But the most sensitive honour would have allowed us to lay down our arms after the immense and heroic effort of the first few days and to trust to the victor's clemency when he recognized that we were beaten. Nothing compelled us to immolate ourselves entirely, to sur-

render, in succession, as a burnt-offering to our ideals, all that we possessed on earth and to continue the struggle after we were crushed, even in the last torments of starvation, which to-day holds three millions of us in its grip. Nothing compelled us to this course, other than the increasingly lofty ideal of duty held by those who began by putting it into practice and are now living in its fulfilment.

As for you English, you had to come to our assistance, that is to say, to send us the troops which you had ready under arms; but nothing compelled you either, after the first useless engagements, to devote yourselves with unparalleled ardour and self-sacrifice, to hurl into the mortal and stupendous battle the whole of your youth, the fairest upon earth, and all your riches, the most prodigious in this world, nor to conjure up from your soil, by a miracle which was thought impossible, in

fewer months than the years that would have seemed needful, the most gallant, determined and tenacious armies that have yet been marshalled in this war. Nothing compelled you, save the spirit of emulation, the same mad love of duty, the same passion for justice, the same idolatry of the given word which, that it may be sure of doing all that it promised, performs far more than it would have dared to promise.

4

Now, during the last few weeks, a new combatant has entered the lists, one who occupies a place quite apart in the sacred hierarchy of duty and honour and in the moral history of this war. I speak of Italy; and I pay her the tribute of homage which is her due and which I well know that you will render with me, for you of all nations are qualified to do so.

Italy had no treaty except with our ene-

mies. Her first act of justice, when confronted with an iniquitous aggression, was to discard this treaty, which was about to draw her into a crime which she had the courage to judge and condemn from the outset, while her former allies were still in the full flush of a might that seemed unshakable. After this verdict, which was worthy of the land where justice first saw the light, she found herself free; she now owed no obligations to any one. There was nothing left to compel her to rush into this carnage, which she could contemplate calmly from the vantage of her delightful cities; and she had only to wait till the twelfth hour to gather its first fruits. There was no longer any compact, any written bond, signed by the hands of kings or peoples, that could involve her destiny. But now, at the spectacle, unforeseen and daily more abominable and disconcerting, of the barbarian invasion, words half-

effaced and secret treaties written by unknown hands on the souls and consciences of all men revealed themselves and slowly gathered life and radiance. To some extent I was a witness of these things; and I was able, so to speak, to follow with my eyes the awakening and the irresistible promulgation of those great and mysterious laws of justice, pity and love which are higher and more imperishable than all those which we have engraved in marble or bronze. With the increase of the crimes, the power of these laws increased and extended. We may regard the intervention of Italy in many ways. Like every human action and, above all, like every political action, it is due to a thousand causes, many of which are trifling. Among them we may see the legitimate hatred and the eternal resentment felt towards an hereditary enemy. We may discover an interested intention to take part, without

too much risk, in a victory already certain and in its previously allotted spoils. We may see in it anything that we please: the resolves of men contain factors of all kinds; but we must pity those who are able to consider none but the meaner sides of the matter, for these are the only sides which never count and which are always deceptive. To find the real and lasting truth, we must learn to view the great masses and the great feelings of mankind from above. It is in them and in their great and simple movements that the will of the soul and of destiny is asserted, for these two form the eternal substance of a people. And, in the present case, the movement of the great masses and the great feelings of the people took the form of an immense impulse of sympathy and indignation, which gradually increased, penetrating farther and farther into the popular strata and gathering volume as it pro-

gressed, until it urged a whole nation to assume the burden of a war which it knew to be crushing and merciless, a war which each of those who called for it knew to be a war which he himself must wage, with his own hands, with his own body, a war which would wrest him from the pleasant ways of peace, from his labours and his comforts, which would weigh terribly upon all those whom he loved, which would expose him for weeks, perhaps for months, to incredible sufferings and which meant almost certain death to a third or a half of those who demanded the right to brave it. And all this, I repeat, occurred without any material necessity, from no other motive than a fine sense of honour and a magnificent surge of admiration and pity for a small foreign nation that was being unjustly martyred. We cannot repeat it too often: here, as in the case of the sacrifice which Belgium

and England offered to the ideal of honour, is a new and unprecedented fact in history.

BELGIUM'S FLAG DAY

IX

BELGIUM'S FLAG DAY

I

TO-DAY our flag will quiver in every French hand as a symbol of love and gratitude. This day should be a day of hope and glory for all Belgium.

Let us forget for a moment our terrible distress; let us forget our plains and meadows, the fairest and most fertile in Europe, now ravaged to such a degree that the utmost that one can say is powerless to give any idea of a desolation which seems irremediable. Let us forget—if to forget them be possible—the women, the children, the old men, peaceable and innocent, who have been massacred in their thousands, the tale of whom will amaze the world when once the grim barrier is broken behind which so many secret hor-

rors are being committed. Let us forget those who are dying of hunger in our country, a land without harvests and without homes, a land methodically taxed, pillaged and crushed until it is drained of the last drop of its life-blood. Let us forget those remnants of our people who are scattered hither and thither, who have trodden the path of exile, who are living on public charity, which, though it show itself full of brotherhood and affection, is yet so oppressive to those supremely industrious hands, which had never known the grievous burden of alms. Let us forget even those last of our cities to be menaced, the fairest, the proudest, the most beloved of our cities, which constitute the very face of our country and which only a miracle could now save. Let us forget, in a word, the greatest calamity and the most crying injustice of history and think to-day only of our approaching deliverance. It is not

too early to hail it. It is already in all our thoughts, as it is in all our hearts. It is already in the air which we breathe, in all the eyes that smile at us, in all the voices that welcome us, in all the hands outstretched to us, waving the laurels which they hold; for what is bringing us deliverance is the wonder, the admiration of the whole world!

2

To-morrow we shall go back to our homes. We shall not mourn though we find them in ruins. They will rise again more beautiful than of old from the ashes and the shards. We shall know days of heroic poverty; but we have learnt that poverty is powerless to sadden souls upheld by a great love and nourished by a noble ideal. We shall return with heads erect, regenerated in a regenerated Europe, rejuvenated by our magnificnt misfortune,

ON THE DEATH OF A LITTLE SOLDIER

X

ON THE DEATH OF A LITTLE SOLDIER

I

WHEN I speak of this little soldier who fell a few days ago, up there in the Vosges, it is not that I may mourn him publicly. It behoves us in these days to mourn our dead in secret. Personal sorrows no longer count; and we must learn how to suppress them in the presence of that greater sorrow which extends over all the world, the particular sorrow of the mothers who are setting us an example of the most heroic silence that human suffering has been taught to observe since suffering first visited womankind. For the admirable silence of the mothers is one of the great and striking lessons of this war. Amid that tragic and sublime silence no regret dare make itself heard.

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But, though my grief remains dumb, my admiration can still raise its voice; and in speaking of this young soldier, who had not reached man's estate and who died as the bravest of men, I speak of all his brothers-in-arms and hail thousands like him in his name, which name becomes a great and glorious symbol; for at this time, when a prodigious wave of unselfishness and courage, surging up from the very depths of the human race, uplifts the men who are fighting and giving their lives for its future, they all resemble one another in the same perfection.

2

My friend Raymond Bon was a sergeant in the 27th battalion of the Chasseurs Alpins. He left for the front in August, 1914, with the other recruits of the 1915 class, which means that he was hardly twenty years of age; and he won his stripes

on the battlefield, after being twice named in dispatches. The second time was on returning from a murderous assault at Thann, in Upper Alsace, in which he had greatly distinguished himself. I quote the exact words:

"Corporal Bon is mentioned in the orders of the battalion for his gallantry under fire and his indifference to danger. When the leader of his section was killed, Bon took command, rushed to the front and, shouting to his men to follow him, gave proofs of the greatest initiative and courage. He was the first in the enemy's trenches with his section."

That day he was promoted to sergeant and complimented by the general in front of his battalion in the following terms:

"This is the second time, my friend, that

I am told what you have done; next time you shall be told what I have done."

To-day men tell of his death, but also of the undying glory which death alone confers.

"At Hartmannsviller," writes one of Bon's comrades, "according to his captain's story, our friend's company was held in reserve, waiting to support the attack delivered by a regiment of infantry. The order came to support and reinforce the attack. The company at once leapt from the trenches, with the captain and Bon at its head. There was a salvo of artillery; and the bursting of a great shell caught Raymond almost full in the body, smashing his right leg and his chest. The captain was hit in the right hand. Notwithstanding his horrible wounds, Bon did not lose consciousness; he was able to stammer out a few words and to press the hand

which the captain gave him. In less than two minutes all was over."

And the captain adds:

"Always ready to sacrifice himself; a brave among the brave."

These are modest and yet glorious details: modest because they are so very common, because they are constantly being repeated in their noble monotony and springing up from every side, numberless as the essential actions of our daily life; and glorious because before this war they seemed so rare and almost legendary and incomprehensible.

3

Raymond Bon was a child of the south, of that Provence which, day after day, is shedding torrents of its blood to wipe out slanders which we can no longer remember without turning pale with anger and

indignation. He was born at Avignon, the old city of the Popes and the cicadas, where men have louder accents and lighter hearts than elsewhere. He was a little boxing-master, who earned a livelihood at Nice for himself and his destitute parents by giving lessons in the noble art of self-defence with the good, ever-ready weapons which nature has bestowed upon us. He boasted no other education than that which a lad picks up at the primary school; but, almost illiterate as he was, he possessed all the refinement, the innate culture, the unconscious delicacy and tact, the kindliness of speech and feeling and the beautiful heart of that comely race whose foremost sons seem to be purified and spiritualized from their first childish steps by the most radiant sunshine in the world. One would say that they were directly related to those exquisite ephebes of ancient Greece who sprang into existence ready to understand

all things and to experience life's purest emotions before they themselves had lived. My reason for insisting upon the point is that, in this respect above all, he represented thousands and thousands of young men from that wonderful region where all the best and most lovable qualities of mankind lie hidden all around beneath the indifferent surface of everyday existence, only awaiting a favourable occasion to blossom into astonishing flowers of grace and generosity and heroism.

4

When I heard that he had gone to the front, I felt a melancholy certainty that I should never set eyes on him again. He was of those whose fate there is no mistaking. He was one of those predestined heroes whose courage marks them out beforehand for death and laurels. I but too well knew his eagerness, his unbounded sin-

cerity and single-mindedness and his great heart: that admirable heart devoid of all caution or ulterior motive or calculation, that heart turned, at all times and with all its might, purely towards honour and duty. He was bound to be in the trenches and in the bayonet-charge the same man that I had so often seen in the ring, taking risks from the start, taking them wholesale, unremittingly, blindly and cheerfully and al- was ready with his pleasant smile, like that of a shy child, at any time to face whatever giant might have challenged him.

I remember that one day in the year 1914, he was training Georges Carpentier, who was to meet some negro heavy-weight or other. The disproportion in the strength of the two men struck my friends and me as rather alarming; and we took the champion of the world aside and begged him not to hit too hard and to spare our little instructor as much as he could. That good

fellow Carpentier, who is full of chivalrous gentleness, promised to do what we asked; but after the first round he came back to us and said:

"I can't let him off just as lightly as I should like. The little chap is too plucky and too sensitive; and I have to hit out in earnest. Besides, he overheard you and what he says is, 'Never mind what the gentlemen say; they are much too considerate and are always afraid of my getting smashed up. There's no fear of that. You go for me hard, else we sha'n't be doing good work.' "

5

"Good work." That is evidently what he did down at the front and what all of them there are doing. It is indeed fine work, the most glorious that a man can perform, to die like that for a cause whose triumph he will not behold, for benefits which he does not reap and which will

accrue solely to his fellow-men whom he will never see again. For, apart from those benefits, like so many other men, like almost all the others, he had nothing to gain and nothing to lose by this war. All that he possessed in the world was the strength of his two arms; and that strength finds a country everywhere.

But we are no longer concerned with the personal and immediate interests that guide nearly all the actions of everyday life. A loftier ideal has visited men's minds and occupies them wholly; and the least prepared, the humblest, the minds that seemed to understand hardly anything of the existence that came before the tremendous trial, now feel it and live it as thoroughly and with the same infinite ampleness as do those minds which thought themselves alone capable of grasping it, of considering it from above or contemplating it from every side. Never did a sheer ideal sink

so deeply into so many hearts or abide there for so long without wavering or faltering. And therefore, beyond a doubt, somewhere on high, in the heart of the unknown powers that rule us, there is being piled up at this moment the most wonderful treasure of immaterial forces that man has ever possessed, one upon which he will draw until the end of time; for in that superhuman treasure-house nothing is lost and we are still living day by day on the virtues stored in it long centuries ago by the heroes of Greece and Rome, by the saints and martyrs of the primitive Church and by the flower of mediæval chivalry.

THE HOUR OF DESTINY

XI

THE HOUR OF DESTINY

I

WE ARE already free to speak of this war as if it were ended and of victory as if it were assured. In principle, in the region of moral certainties, Germany has been beaten since the battle of the Marne; and reality, which is always slower, because it goes burdened beneath the weight of matter, must needs come obediently to join the ranks of those certainties. The last agony may be prolonged for weeks and months, for the animal is endowed with the stubborn and almost inextinguishable vitality of the beasts of prey; but it is wounded to the death; and we have only to wait patiently, weapon in hand, for the final convulsions that announce the end. The historic event, the

greatest beyond doubt since man possessed a history, is therefore accomplished; and, strange to say, it seems as though it had been accomplished in spite of history, against its laws and contrary to its wishes. It is rash, I know, to speak of such things; and it behoves us to be very cautious in these speculations which pass the scope of human understanding; but, when we consider what the annals of this earth of ours have taught us, it seemed written in the book of the world's destinies that Germany was bound to win. It was not only, as we are too ready at the first glance to believe, the megalomania of an autocrat drunk with vanity, the gross vanity of some brainless buffoon; it was not the warlike impulses, the blind infatuation and egoism of a feudal caste; it was not even the impatient and deliberately fanned envy and covetousness of a too prolific race close-cramped on a dreary and ungrateful soil:

it was none of these that let loose the hateful war. All these causes, adventitious or fortuitous as they were, only settled the hour of the decision; but the decision itself was taken and written, probably ages ago, in other spheres which cannot be reached by the conscious will of man, spheres in which dark and mighty laws hold sway over illimitable time and space. The whole line, the whole huge curve of history showed to the mind of whosoever tried to read its sacred and fearful hieroglyphics that the day of a new, a formidable and inexorable event was at hand.

The theories built up on this point in the last sixty years by the German professors, notably by Giesbrecht, the historian of the Ottos and the Hohenstaufens, and Treitschke, the historian of the Hohenzollerns, do not necessarily carry conviction but are at least impressive; and the work of these two writers, which we do not know

as well as we should, and of Treitschke in particular possessed in Germany an influence that sank deep into every mind, far exceeding that of Nietzsche, which we looked upon as preponderant.

But let us ignore for the moment all that belongs to a remote past, the study of which would call for more space than we have at our disposal. Let us not question the empire of the Ottos, the Hohenstaufens or the Hapsburgs, in which Germany, at least as a nation and a race, played but a secondary part and was still unconscious of her existence. Let us rather see what is happening nearer to us and, so to speak, before our very eyes.

2

A hundred years ago, under Napoleon, France enjoyed her spell of hegemony, which she was not able to prolong because this hegemony was more the work of a

prodigious but accidental genius than the fruit of a real and intrinsic power. Next came the turn of England, who to-day possesses the greatest empire that the world has seen since the days of ancient Rome, that is to say, more than a fifth part of the habitable globe. But this vast empire rests no more than did Napoleon's upon an incontestible force, inasmuch as up to this day it was defended only by an army less numerous and less well-equipped than that of many a smaller nation, thus almost inevitably inviting war, as Professor Cramb pointed out a year or two ago in his prophetic book, *Germany and England,* which has only recently aroused the interest which it deserves.

It seemed, therefore, as if between these two Powers, which were more illusory than real, pending the advent of Russia, whose hour had not yet struck; in this gap in history, between a nation on the verge of

its decline, or at least seemingly incapable of defending itself, and a nation that was still too young and incapable of attack, fate offered a magnificent place to whoso cared to take it. This is what Germany felt, at first instinctively, urged by all the ill-defined forces that impel mankind, and subsequently, in these latter years, with a consciousness that became ever clearer and more persistent. She grasped the fact that her turn had come to reign over the earth, that she must take her chance and seize the opportunity that comes but once. She prepared to answer the call of fate and, supported by the mysterious aid which it lends to those whom it summons, she did answer, we must admit, in an astonishing and most formidable manner.

She was within a hair's breadth of succeeding. A little less prolonged and less gallant resistance on the part of Belgium, a suspicious movement from Italy, a false

step made upon the banks of the Marne; and we can picture Paris falling; France overrun and fighting heroically to her last gasp; Russia, not crushed, but weary of seeking victory and making terms for good or ill with a conqueror impotent to harm her; the neutral nations more or less reluctantly siding with the strongest; England isolated, giving up her colonies to staunch the wounds of her invaded isle; the fasces of justice broken asunder by a separate peace here, a separate peace there, each equally humiliating; and Germany, monstrous, ferocious, implacable, finally towering alone over the ruins of Europe.

3

Now it seems that we have turned aside the inflexible decree. It seems that we have averted the fate that was about to be accomplished. It was bearing down upon us with the weight of the ages, with

all the weight of all the vague but irresistible aspirations of the past and, perhaps, the future. Thanks to the greatest effort which mankind has ever opposed to the unknown gods that rule it, we are entitled to believe that the decree has broken down and that we have driven it into the evil cave where never human force before had compelled it to hide its defeat.

I say, "It seems;" I say, "We are entitled to believe." The fact is that the ordeal is not yet past. Even on the day when the war is ended and when victory is in our hands, destiny will not yet be conquered. It has happened—seldom, it is true, but still it has happened twice or thrice—that a nation has compelled the course of fate to turn aside or to fall back. The nation congratulated herself, even as we believe that we have the right to do. But events were not slow in proving that she had congratulated herself too soon. Fatality, that is to

say, the enormous mass of causes and effects of which we have no understanding, was not overcome; it was only delayed, it awaited its revenge and its day, or at least what we call its day, which may extend over a hundred years and more where nations are concerned, for fatality does not reckon in the manner of men, but after the fashion of the great movements of nature. It is important at this time to know whether we shall be able to escape that revenge and that day. If men and nations were swayed only by reason, if, after being so often the absolute masters of their happiness and their future, they had not so often destroyed that which they had just achieved, then we might say—and indeed ought to say—that our escape depends only upon ourselves. In point of fact, three-quarters of the risk are run and the fourth is in our power; we have only to keep it so. Almost all the chances

of the fight are on our side at last; and, when the war is over, there will be nothing but our wisdom and our will confronting a destiny which from that time onward will be powerless to take its course, unless it first succeed in blinding and perverting them.

In this hour all that lies hidden under that mysterious word will be waiting on our decision, waiting to know if victory is with us or with it. It is after we have won that we must really vanquish; it is in the hour of peace that the actual war will begin against an invisible foe, a hundred times as dangerous as the one of whom we have seen too much. If at that hour we do not profit by all our advantages; if we do not destroy, root and branch, the military power of an enemy who is in secret alliance with the evil influences of the earth; if we do not here and now, by an irrevocable compact, forearm ourselves

against our sense of pity and generosity, our weakness, our imprudence, our future rivalries and discords; if we leave a single outlet to the beast at bay; if, through our negligence, we give it a single hope, a single opportunity of coming to the surface and taking breath, then the vigilant fatality which has but one fixed idea will resume its progress and pursue its way, dragging history with it and laughing over its shoulder at man once more tricked and discomfited. Everything that we have done and suffered, the ruins, the sacrifices, the nameless tortures and the numberless dead, will have served no purpose and will be lost beyond redemption. Everything will not have to be done over again, for nothing is ever done over again and fortunate opportunities do not occur twice; but everything except our woes and all their consequences will be as though it had never been.

4

It will therefore be a matter of holding our own against the enemy whom we do not see and mastering him until the turn or chance of the accursed race is past. How long will that be? We cannot tell; but, in the swift-moving history of to-day, it seems probable that the waiting and the struggle will be much shorter than they would have been in former times. Is it possible that fatality—by which I mean what perhaps for a moment was the unacknowledged desire of the planet—shall not regain the upper hand? At the stage which man has reached, I hope and believe so. He had never conquered it before; but also he had not yet risen to the height which he has now attained. There is no reason why that which has never happened should not take place one day; and everything seems to tell us that man is approaching the day whereon, seizing the most

glorious opportunity that has ever presented itself since he acquired a consciousness, he will at last learn that he is able, when he pleases, to control his whole fate in this world.

IN ITALY

XII

IN ITALY

I

A FEW days before Italy formed her great resolve, the following lines appeared in one of the leading Pangermanic organs of the peoples beyond the Rhine, the *Kreuzzeitung:*

"We have already observed that it will not do to be too optimistic as to Italy's decision; in point of fact, the situation is very serious. If none but moderate considerations had ruled Italy's intentions, there is little doubt as to which path she would choose; but we know the height which the wave of Germanophobia has attained in that country, a significant mark of the popular sentiment being the declaration of the Italian Socialists upon the reasons of

tneir inability to oppose the war. An equal source of danger is the fact that the government feels that it no longer controls the current of public opinion."

The whole drama of Italian intervention is summed up in these lines, which explain it better than would the longest and most learned commentaries.

The Italian government, restrained by a politic wisdom and prudence, excessive, perhaps, but very excusable, did not wish for war. To the utmost limits of patience, until its dignity and its sense of security could bear no more, it did all that could be done to spare its people the greatest calamity that can befall a land. It held out until it was literally submerged and carried away by the flood of Germanophobia of which the passage which I have quoted speaks. I witnessed the rising of this flood. When I arrived in Milan, at the

end of November, 1914, to speak a few sentences at a charity-fête organized for the benefit of the Belgian refugees, the hatred of Germany was already storing itself up in men's hearts, but had not as yet come to the surface. Here and there it did break out, but it was still fearful, circumspect and hesitating. One felt it brewing, seething in the depths of men's souls, but it seemed as yet to be feeling its way, to be reckoning itself up, to be painfully attaining self-consciousness. When I returned to Italy in March, 1915, I was amazed to behold the unhoped-for height to which the invading flood had so swiftly risen. That pious hatred, that necessary hatred, which in this case is merely a magnificent passion for justice and humanity, had swept over everything. It had come out into the full sunlight; it thrilled and quivered at the least appeal, proud and happy to assert itself, to manifest itself with the beautiful

tumultuous ostentation of the South; and it was the "neutrals" that now hid themselves after the manner of unspeakable insects. That species had all but disappeared, annihilated by the storm that was gathering on every hand. The Germans themselves had gone to earth, no one knew where; and from that moment it was certain that war was imminent and inevitable.

In the space of three months a stupendous work had been accomplished. It is impossible for the moment to weigh and determine the part of each of those who performed it. But we can even now say that in Italy, which is governed preeminently by public opinion and which, more than any other nation, has in its blood the traditions and the habits of the forum and the ancient republics, it is above all the spoken word that changes men's hearts and urges them to action.

2

From this point of view, the admirable campaign of agitation and propaganda undertaken by M. Jules Destrée, author of *En Italie,* was of an importance and possessed consequences which are beyond comparison with anything else accomplished and which are difficult to realize by those who were not present at one or other of the meetings at which, for more than six months, indefatigably, travelling from town to town, from the smallest to the most populous, he uttered the distressful complaint of martyred Belgium, unveiling the lies, the felonies, the monstrosities and the acts of devastation perpetrated by the barbarian horde and making heard, with sovran eloquence, the august voice of outraged justice and of baffled right.

I heard him more than once and was able to judge for myself of the magical effect—the term is by no means too strong

—which he produced on the Italian crowd. It was a magnificent spectacle, which I shall never forget. I then perceived for the first time in my life the mysterious, incantatory, supernatural powers of great eloquence.

He would come forward wearing a languid, dejected and overburdened air. The crowd, like all crowds awaiting their master, sat thronged at his feet, silently humming, undecided, unshaped, not yet knowing what it wanted or intended. He would begin; his voice was low, leisurely, almost hesitating; he seemed to be painfully searching for his ideas and expressions, but in reality he was feeling for the sensitive and magnetic points of the huge and unknown being whose soul he wished to reach. At the outset it was evident that he did not know exactly what he was going to say. He swept his words across the assembly as though they had been antennæ. They

came back to him charged with sympathy and strength and precise information. Then his delivery became more rapid, his body drew itself erect, his stature and his very size increased. His voice grew fuller; it became tremendous, seductive or sarcastic, overwhelming like a hurricane all the ideas of his audience, beating against the walls of the largest buildings, flowing, through the doors and windows, out into the surging streets, there to kindle the ardour and hatred which already thrilled the hall. His face—tawny, brutal, ravaged, furrowed with shade and slashed with light, powerful and magnificent in its ugliness—became the very mask, the visible symbol of the furious and generous passions of the crowd. At moments such as this, he truly merited the name which I heard those about me murmuring, the name which the Italians gave him in that kind of helpless fear and delight which men feel in the

presence of an irresistible force: he was "the Terrible Orator."

But all this power, which seemed so blindly released, was in reality extremely circumspect, extremely subtle and marvellously disciplined. The handling of those shy though excited crowds called for the utmost prudence, as a certain French speaker, whom I will not name, but who wished to make a like attempt, learnt to his cost. The Italian is generous, courteous, hospitable, expansive and enthusiastic, but also proud and susceptible. He does not readily allow another to dictate his conduct, to reproach him with his shortcomings or to offer him advice. He is conscious of his own worth; he knows that he is the eldest son of our civilization and that no one has the right to patronize him. It is necessary, therefore, beneath the appearance of the most fiery and unbridled eloquence, to observe perfect self-mastery,

combined with infinite tact and discretion. It is often essential to divine instantaneously the temper of the crowd, to bow before the most varied and unexpected circumstances and to profit by them. I remember, among others, a singularly prickly meeting at Naples. The Neapolitans are hardly warlike people; but they none the less felt on this occasion that they must not appear indifferent to the generous movement which was thrilling the rest of Italy. At the last moment, we were warned that we might speak of Belgium and her misfortunes, but that any too pointed allusion to the war, any too violent attack upon the Teutonic bandits would arouse protests which might injure our cause. I, being no orator, had only my poor written speech, which, as I could not alter it, became dangerous. It was necessary to prepare the ground. Destrée mounted the platform and, in a masterly

improvisation, began by establishing a long, patient and scholarly parallel between Flemish and Italian art, between the great painters of Florence and Venice and those of Flanders and Brabant; and thence, by imperceptible degrees, he shifted his ground to the present distress in Belgium, to the atrocities and infamies committed by her oppressors, to the whole story, to the whole series of injustices, to the whole danger of this nameless war. He was applauded; the barriers were broken down. Anything added to what he had said was superfluous; but everything was permissible.

3

For the rest, it must be admitted that a wonderful impulse of pity and admiration for Belgium sustained the orator and lent his every word a range and a potency which it could not otherwise have possessed. This unanimous and spontaneous

sympathy assumed at times the most touching and unexpected forms. All difficulties were smoothed away before us as by magic; the sternest prohibitions were ingeniously evaded or benevolently removed. From the towns which we were due to visit the hotel-keepers telegraphed to us, begging as a favour permission to give us lodging; and, when the time came to settle our account, it was impossible to get them to accept the slightest remuneration; and the whole staff, from the majestic porter to the humblest boot-boy, heroically refused to be tipped. If we entered a restaurant and were recognized, the customers would rise, take counsel together and order a bottle of some famous wine; then one among them would come forward, requesting, gracefully and respectfully, that we would do them the honour of drinking with them to the deliverance of our martyred motherland. At

the memory of what that unhappy country had suffered for the salvation of the world, a sort of discreet and affecting fervour was visible in the looks of all; it may be said that nowhere was the heroic sacrifice of Belgium more nobly and more affectionately admired and understood; and it will be recognized one day, when time has done its work, that, although other causes induced Italy to take upon her shoulders the terrible burden of what was not an inevitable war, the only causes that really, in the depths of her soul, liberated her resolve were the admiration, the indignation and the heroic pity inspired by the spectacle, incessantly renewed, of our unmerited afflictions. You will not find in history a nobler sacrifice nor one made for a nobler cause.

ON REREADING THUCYDIDES

XIII

ON REREADING THUCYDIDES

I

AT MOMENTS above all when history is in the making, in these times when great and as yet incomplete pages are being traced, pages by the side of which all that had already been written will pale, it is a good and salutary thing to turn to the past in search of instruction, warning and encouragement. In this respect, the unwearying and implacable war which Athens kept up against Sparta for twenty-seven years, with the hegemony of Greece for a stake, presents more than one analogy with that which we ourselves are waging and teaches lessons that should make us reflect. The counsels which it gives us are all the more precious, all the more striking or profound inasmuch as the

war is narrated to us by a man who remains, with Tacitus, despite the striving of the centuries, the progress of life and all the opportunities of doing better, the greatest historian that the earth has ever known. Thucydides is in fact the supreme historian, at the same time swift and detailed, scrupulously sifting his evidence but giving free play to intuition, setting forth none but incontestable facts, yet divining the most secret intentions and embracing at a glance all the present and future political consequences of the events which he relates. He is withal one of the most perfect writers, one of the most admirable artists in the literature of mankind; and from this point of view, in an entirely different and almost antagonistic world, he has not an equal save Tacitus. But Tacitus is before everything a wonderful tragic poet, a painter of foul abysses, of fire and blood, who can lay bare the souls of monsters and their

crimes, whereas Thucydides is above all a great political moralist, a statesman endowed with extraordinary perspicacity, a painter of the open air and of a free state, who portrays the minds of those sane, ingenious, subtle, generous and marvellously intelligent men who peopled ancient Greece. The one piles on the gloom with a lavish hand, gathers dark shadows which he pierces at each sentence with lightning-flashes, but remains sombre and oppressed on the very summits, whereas the other condenses nothing but light, groups together judgments that are so many radiant sheaves and remains luminous and breathes freely in the very depths. The first is passionate, violent, fierce, indignant, bitter, sincerely but pitilessly unjust and all made up of magnificent animosities; the second is always even, always at the same high level, which is that which the noblest endeavour of human reason can attain. He has no

passion but a passion for the public weal, for justice, glory and intelligence. It is as though all his work were spread out in the blue sky; and even his famous picture of the plague of Athens seems covered with sunshine.

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But there is no need to follow up this parallel, which is not my object. I will not dwell any longer—though perhaps I may return to them one day—upon the lessons which we might derive from that Peloponnesian War, in which the position of Athens towards Lacedaemon provides more than one point of comparison with that of France towards Germany. True, we do not there see, as in our own case, civilized nations fighting a morally barbarian people: it was a contest between Greeks and Greeks, displaying however in the same physical race two different and incompatible spirits. Athens stood for human life

in its happiest development, gracious, cheerful and peaceful. She took no serious interest except in the happiness, the imponderous riches, the innocent and perfect beauties, the sweet leisures, the glories and the arts of peace. When she went to war, it was as though in play, with the smile still on her face, looking upon it as a more violent pleasure than the rest, or as a duty joyfully accepted. She bound herself down to no discipline, she was never ready, she improvised everything at the last moment, having, as Pericles said, "with habits not of labour but of ease and courage not of art but of nature, the double advantage of escaping the experience of hardship in anticipation and of facing them in the hour of need as fearlessly as those who are never free from them."[1]

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For Sparta, on the other hand, life was nothing but endless work, an incessant strain, having no other objective than war. She was gloomy, austere, strict, morose, almost ascetic, an enemy to everything that excuses man's presence on this earth, a nation of spoilers, looters, incendiaries and devastators, a nest of wasps beside a swarm of bees, a perpetual menace and danger to everything around her, as hard upon herself as upon others and boasting an ideal which may appear lofty, if it can be man's ideal to be unhappy and the contented slave of unrelenting discipline. On the other hand, she differed entirely from those whom we are now fighting in that she was generally honest, loyal and upright and showed a certain respect for the gods and their temples, for treaties and for international law. It is none the less true that, if she had from the beginning reigned alone or without encountering a long resistance, Hellas would

never have been the Hellas that we know. She would have left in history but a precarious trace of useless warlike virtues and of minor combats without glory; and mankind would not have possessed that centre of light towards which it turns to this day.

3

What was to be the issue of this war? Here begins the lesson which it were well to study thoroughly. It would seem indeed as if, with the first encounters in that conflict, as in our own, the inexplicable will that governs nations was favourable to the less civilized; and in fact Lacedaemon gained the upper hand, at least temporarily and sufficiently to abuse her victory to such a degree that she soon lost its fruits. But Athens held the evil will in check for seven-and-twenty years; for twenty-seven summers and twenty-seven winters, to use Thucydides' reckoning, she proved to us

that it is possible, in defiance of probability, to fight against what seems written in the book of heaven and hell. Nay more, at a time when Sparta, whose sole industry, whose sole training, whose only reason for existence and whose only ideal was war, was hugging the thought of crushing in a few weeks, under the weight of her formidable hoplites, a frivolous, careless and ill-organized city, Athens, notwithstanding the treacherous blow which fate dealt her by sending a plague that carried off a third of her civil population and a quarter of her army, Athens for seventeen years definitely held victory in her grasp.

During this period, she more than once had Lacedaemon at her mercy and did not begin to descend the stony path of ruin and defeat until after the disastrous expedition to Sicily, in which, carried away by her rhetoricians and bitten with inconceivable folly, she hurled all her fleet, all her sold-

iers and all her wealth into a remote, unprofitable, unknown and desperate adventure. She resisted the decline of her fortunes for yet another ten years, heaping up her sins against wisdom and simple common sense and with her own hands drawing tighter the knot that was to strangle her, as though to show us that destiny is for the most part but our own madness and that what we call unavoidable fatality has its root only in mistakes that might easily be avoided.

4

To point this moral was again not my real object. In these days when we have so many sorrows to assuage and so many deaths to honour, I wished merely to recall a page written over two thousand years ago, to the glory of the Athenian heroes who fell for their country in the first battles of that war. According to the custom of the Greeks, the bones of the dead

that had been burnt on the battlefield were solemnly brought back to Athens at the end of the year; and the people chose the greatest speaker in the city to deliver the funeral oration. This honour fell to Pericles, son of Xanthippus, the Pericles of the golden age of human beauty. After pronouncing a well-merited and magnificent eulogium on the Athenian nation and institutions, he concluded with the following words:

"Indeed, if I have dwelt at some length upon the character of our country, it has been to show that our stake in the struggle is not the same as theirs who have no such blessing to lose and also that the panegyric of the men over whom I am now speaking might be by definite proofs established. That panegyric is now in a great measure complete; for the Athens that I have celebrated is only what the heroism of these and their like have made her, men whose

fame, unlike that of most Hellenes, will be found to be only commensurate with their deserts. And, if a test of worth be wanted, it is to be found in their closing scene; and this not only in the cases in which it set the final seal upon their merit, but also in those in which it gave the first intimation of their having any. For there is justice in the claim that steadfastness in his country's battles should be as a cloak to cover a man's other imperfections, since the good action has blotted out the bad and his merit as a citizen more than outweighed his demerits as an individual. But none of these allowed either wealth with its prospect of future enjoyment to unnerve his spirit, or poverty with its hope of a day of freedom and riches to tempt him to shrink from danger. No, holding that vengeance upon their enemies was more to be desired than any personal blessings and reckoning this to be the most glorious of

hazards, they joyfully determined to accept the risk, to make sure of their vengeance and to let their wishes wait; and, while committing to hope the uncertainty of final success, in the business before them they thought fit to act boldly and trust in themselves. Thus choosing to die resisting rather than to live submitting, they fled only from dishonour, but met danger face to face and, after one brief moment, while at the summit of their fortune, escaped not from their fear but from their glory.

"So died these man as became Athenians. You, their survivors, must determine to have as unfaltering a resolution in the field, though you may pray that it may have a happier issue. And, not contented with ideas derived only from words of the advantages which are bound up with the defence of your country, though these would furnish a valuable text to a speaker even before an audience so alive to them as the

present, you must yourselves realize the power of Athens and feed your eyes upon her from day to day, till love of her fills your hearts; and then, when all her greatness shall break upon you, you must reflect that it was by courage, sense of duty and a keen feeling of honour in action that men were enabled to win all this and that no personal failure in an enterprise could make them consent to deprive their country of their valour, but they laid it at her feet as the most glorious contribution that they could offer. For by this offering of their lives made in common by them all they each of them individually received that renown which never grows old and, for a sepulchre, not so much that in which their bones have been deposited, but that noblest of shrines wherein their glory is laid up to be eternally remembered upon every occasion on which deed or story shall call for its commemoration. For heroes have the

whole earth for their tomb; and in lands far from their own, where the column with its epitaph declares it, there is enshrined in every breast a record unwritten with no tablet to preserve it, except that of the heart. These take as your model and, judging happiness to be the fruit of freedom and freedom of valour, never decline the dangers of war. For it is not the miserable that would most justly be unsparing of their lives: these have nothing to hope for; it is rather they to whom continued life may bring reverses as yet unknown and to whom a fall, if it came, would be most tremendous in its consequences. And surely, to a man of spirit, the degradation of cowardice must be immeasurably more grievous than the unfelt death which strikes him in the midst of his strength and patriotism!

"Comfort, therefore, not condolence, is what I have to offer to the parents of the

dead who may be here. Numberless are the chances to which, as they know, the life of man is subject; but fortunate indeed are they who draw for their lot a death so glorious as that which has caused your mourning and to whom life has been so exactly measured as to terminate in the happiness in which it has been passed. Still I know that this is a hard saying, especially when those are in question of whom you will be constantly reminded by seeing in the homes of others blessings of which once you also boasted; for grief is felt not so much for the want of what we have never known as for the loss of that to which we have been long accustomed. Yet you who are still of an age to beget children must bear up in the hope of having others in their stead: not only will they help you to forget those whom you have lost, but they will be to the state at once a reinforcement and a security; for never can a fair or just policy be expected of the citizen who does

not, like his fellows, bring to the decision the interests and apprehensions of a father. While those of you who have passed your prime must congratulate yourselves with the thought that the best part of your life was fortunate and that the brief span that remains will be cheered by the fame of the departed. For it is only the love of honour that never grows old; and honour it is, not gain, as some would have it, that rejoices the heart of age and helplessness.

"And, now that you have brought to a close your lamentations for your relatives, you may depart."

These words spoken twenty-three centuies ago ring in our hearts as though they were uttered yesterday. They celebrate our dead better than could any eloquence of ours, however poignant it might be. Let us bow before their paramount beauty and before the great people that could applaud and understand.

THE DEAD DO NOT DIE

XIV

THE DEAD DO NOT DIE

I

WHEN we behold the terrible loss of so many young lives, when we see so many incarnations of physical and moral vigour, of intellect and of glorious promise pitilessly cut off in their first flower, we are on the verge of despair. Never before have the fairest energies and aspirations of men been flung recklessly and incessantly into an abyss whence comes no sound or answer. Never since it came into existence has humanity squandered its treasure, its substance and its prospects so lavishly. For more than twelve months, on every battlefield, where the bravest, the truest, the most ardent and self-sacrificing are necessarily the first to die and where the less courageous, the less generous, the weak, the ailing,

in a word the less desirable, alone possess some chance of escaping the carnage, for over twelve months a sort of monstrous inverse selection has been in operation, one which seems to be deliberately seeking the downfall of the human race. And we wonder uneasily what the state of the world will be after the great trial and what will be left of it and what will be the future of this stunted race, shorn of all the best and noblest part of it.

The problem is certainly one of the darkest that have ever vexed the minds of men. It contains a material truth before which we remain defenceless; and, if we accept it as it stands, we can discover no remedy for the evil that threatens us. But material and tangible truths are never anything but a more or less salient angle of greater and deeper-lying truths. And, on the other hand, mankind appears to be such a necessary and indestructible force of na-

ture that it has always, hitherto, not only survived the most desperate ordeals, but succeeded in benefiting by them and emerging greater and stronger than before.

2

We know that peace is better than war; it were madness to compare the two. We know that, if this catacylsm let loose by an act of unutterable folly had not come upon the world, mankind would doubtless have reached ere long a zenith of wonderful achievement whose manifestations it is impossible to foreshadow. We know that, if a third or a fourth part of the fabulous sums expended on extermination and destruction had been devoted to works of peace, all the iniquities that poison the air we breathe would have been triumphantly redressed and that the social question, the one great question, that matter of life and death which justice demands that posterity

should face, would have found its definite solution, once and for all, in a happiness which now perhaps even our sons and grandsons will not realize. We know that the disappearance of two or three million young existences, cut down when they were on the point of bearing fruit, will leave in history a void that will not be easily filled, even as we know that among those dead were mighty intellects, treasures of genius which will not come back again and which contained inventions and discoveries that will now perhaps be lost to us for centuries. We know that we shall never grasp the consequences of this thrusting back of progress and of this unprecedented devastation. But, granting all this, it is a good thing to recover our balance and stand upon our feet. There is no irreparable loss. Everything is transformed, nothing perishes and that which seems to be hurled into destruction is not destroyed at all. Our moral

world, even as our physical world, is a vast but hermetically sealed sphere, whence naught can issue, whence naught can fall, to be dissolved in space. All that exists, all that comes into being upon this earth remains there and bears fruit; and the most appalling wastage is but material or spiritual riches flung away for an instant, to fall to the ground again in a new form. There is no escape or leakage, no filtering through cracks, no missing the mark, not even waste or neglect. All this heroism poured out on every side does not leave our planet; and the reason why the courage of our fighters seems so general and yet so extraordinary is that all the might of the dead has passed into the survivors. All those forces of wisdom, patience, honour and self-sacrifice which increase day by day and which we ourselves, who are far from the field of danger, feel rising within us without knowing whence

they come are nothing but the souls of the heroes gathered and absorbed by our own souls.

3

It is well at times to contemplate invisible things as though we saw them with our eyes. This was the aim of all the great religions, when they represented under forms appropriate to the civilization of their day, the latent, deep, instinctive, general and essential truths which are the guiding principles of mankind. All have felt and recognized that loftiest of all truths, the communion of the living and the dead, and have given it various names designating the same mysterious verity: the Christians know it as revival of merit, the Buddhists as reincarnation, or transmigration of souls, and the Japanese as Shintoism, or ancestor-worship. The last are more fully convinced than any other nation

that the dead do not cease to live and that they direct all our actions, are exalted by our virtues and become gods.

Lafcadio Hearn, the writer who has most closely studied and understood that wonderful ancestor-worship, says:

"One of the surprises of our future will certainly be a return to beliefs and ideas long ago abandoned upon the mere assumption that they contained no truth—beliefs still called barbarous, pagan, mediæval, by those who condemn them out of traditional habit. Year after year the researches of science afford us new proof that the savage, the barbarian, the idolater, the monk, each and all have arrived, by different paths, as near to some point of eternal truth as any thinker of the nineteenth century. We are now learning also, that the theories of the astrologers and of the alchemists were but partially, not totally, wrong. We have

reason even to suppose that no dream of the invisible world has ever been dreamed, that no hypothesis of the unseen has ever been imagined—which future science will not prove to have contained some germ of reality."[1]

There are many things which might be added to these lines, notably all that the most recent of our sciences, metapsychics, is engaged in discovering with regard to the miraculous faculties of our subconsciousness.

But, to return more directly to what we were saying, was it not observed that, after the great battles of the Napoleonic era, the birth-rate increased in an extraordinary manner, as though the lives suddenly cut short in their prime were not really dead and were eager to be back again in our midst and complete their career? If we

[1] *Kokoro: Hints and Echoes of Japanese Life*, chapter xiv., "Some thoughts about Ancestor-Worship."

could follow with our eyes all that is happening in the spiritual world that rises above us on every side, we should no doubt see that it is the same with the moral force that seems to be lost on the field of slaughter. It knows where to go, it knows its goal, it does not hesitate. All that our wonderful dead relinquish they bequeath to us; and when they die for us, they leave us their lives not in any strained metaphorical sense, but in a very real and direct way. Virtue goes out of every man who falls while performing a deed of glory; and that virtue drops down upon us; and nothing of him is lost and nothing evaporates in the shock of a premature end. He gives us in one solitary and mighty stroke what he would have given us in a long life of duty and love. Death does not injure life; it is powerless against it. Life's aggregate never changes. What death takes from those who fall enters into those who

are left standing. The number of lamps grows less, but the flame rises higher. Death is in no wise the gainer so long as there are living men. The more it exercises its ravages, the more it increases the intensity of that which it cannot touch; the more it pursues its phantom victories, the better does it prove to us that man will end by conquering death.

IN MEMORIAM

XV

IN MEMORIAM

I

THOSE who die for their country should not be numbered with the dead. We must call them by another name. They have nothing in common with those who end in their beds a life that is worn out, a life almost always too long and often useless. Death, which every elsewhere is but the object of fear and horror, bringing naught but nothingness and despair, this death, on the field of battle, in the clash of glory, becomes more gracious than birth and exhales a beauty greater than that of love. No life will ever give what their youth is offering us, that youth which gives in one moment the days and the years that lay before it. There is no sacrifice to be compared with that which they have made;

for which reason there is no glory that can soar so high as theirs, no gratitude that can surpass the gratitude which we owe them. They have not only a right to the foremost place in our memories: they have a right to all our memories and to everything that we are, since we exist only through them.

2

And now it is in us that their life, so suddenly cut short, must resume its course. Whatever be our faith and whatever the God whom it adores, one thing is almost certain and, in spite of all appearances, is daily becoming more certain: it is that death and life are commingled; the dead and the living alike are but moments, hardly dissimilar, of a single and infinite existence and members of one immortal family. They are not beneath the earth, in the depths of their tombs; they lie deep in our hearts, where all that they once were

will continue to live to to act; and they live in us even as we die in them. They see us, they understand us more nearly than when they were in our arms; let us then keep a watch upon ourselves, so that they witness no actions and hear no words but words and actions that shall be worthy of them.

SUPERNATURAL COMMUNICATIONS IN WAR-TIME

XVI

SUPERNATURAL COMMUNICATIONS IN WAR-TIME

I

IN A volume entitled *The Unknown Guest,* published not long ago, among other essays I devoted one in particular[1] to certain phenomena of intuition, clairvoyance or clairaudience, vision at great distance and even vision of the future. These phenomena were grouped together under the somewhat unsuitable and none too well-constructed title of "psychometry," which, to borrow Dr. Maxwell's excellent definition, is "the faculty possessed by certain persons of placing themselves in relation, either spontaneously or, for the most part, through the intermediary of

[1] Chap. ii.: "Psychometry."

some object, with unknown and often very distant things and people."

The existence of this faculty is no longer seriously denied by any one who has given some little attention to metapsychics; and it is easily verified by those who will take the necessary trouble, for its possessors, though few in number, are not inaccessible. It has been the subject of many experiments and of a few treatises, among which I will name one by M. Duchatel, *Enquête sur des cas de psychométrie,* and Dr. Osty's recent book, *Lucidité et intuition,* which is the most complete and searching work that we have had upon this question until now.

Psychometry is one of the most curious faculties of our subconsciousness and doubtless contains the clue to many of those manifestations which appear to proceed from another world. Let us see, with the aid of a living example, how it is employed.

One of the best mediums of this class is a lady to whom I referred in *The Unknown Guest* as Mme. M. Her visitor gives her an object of some kind that has belonged to or been touched or handled by the person about whom he proposes to question her. Mme. M. operates in a state of trance; but there are other celebrated psychometers who retain all their normal consciousness, so that the hypnotic or somnambulistic state is not, generally speaking, by any means indispensable when we wish to arouse this extraordinary clairvoyance.

After placing the object, usually a letter, in the medium's hands, you say to her:

"I wish you to put yourself in communication with the writer of this letter," or "the owner of this article," as the case may be.

Forthwith the medium not only perceives the person in question, his physical

appearance, his character, his habits, his interests, his state of health, but also, in a series of swift and changing visions that follow one another like the pictures of a cinematograph, sees and describes exactly that person's environment, the surrounding country, the rooms in which he lives, the people who live with him and who wish him well or ill, the mentality and the most secret and unexpected intentions of all the various characters that figure in his existence. If by means of your questions you direct her towards the past, she traces the whole course of the subject's history. If you turn her towards the future, she seems often to discover it as clearly as the past.

But here we must make certain reservations. We are entering upon forbidden tracts; errors are almost the rule and proper supervision is all but impossible. It is better therefore not to venture into those dangerous regions. Pending fuller inves-

tigation of the question, we may say that the foretelling of the future, when it claims to cover a definite space of time, is nearly always illusory. There is scarcely any accuracy of vision, except when the events concerned are very near at hand, already developing or actually being consummated; and it then becomes difficult to distinguish it from presentiments, which in their turn are rarely true except where the immediate future is concerned. To sum up, in the present state of our experience, we observe that what the psychometers and clairvoyants foretell us possesses a certain value and some chance of proving correct only in so far as they put into words our own forebodings, forebodings which again may be quite unknown to us and which they discover deep down in our subconsciousness. They confine themselves—I speak of the genuine mediums—to bringing to light and revealing to us our unconscious and per-

sonal intuition of an event that is hanging over us. But, when they venture to predict a general event, such as the result of a war, an epidemic, an earthquake, which does not interest ourselves exclusively or which is too remote to come within the somewhat limited scope of our intuition, they almost invariably deceive themselves and us.

It is very difficult to fathom the nature of this intuition. Does it relate to events partly or wholly realized, but still in a latent state and perceived before the knowledge of them reaches us through the normal channels of the mind or brain? Does our ever-watchful instinct of self-preservation notice causes or traces which escape our ever-inattentive and slumbering reason? Are we to believe in a sort of auto-suggestion that induces us to realize things which we have been foretold or of which we have had presentiments? This is not the place to examine so complex a problem,

which brings us into contact with all the mysteries of subconsciousness and the preexistence of the future.

There remains another point to which it is well to draw attention in order to avoid misunderstanding and disappointment. Experience shows us that the medium perceives the person in question quite clearly, in his present and usual state, but not necessarily in the exact accidental state of the moment. She will tell you, for instance, that she sees him ailing slightly, lying in a deck-chair in a garden of such and such a kind, surrounded by certain flowers and petting a dog of a certain size and breed. On enquiring, you will find that all these details are strictly correct, with one exception, that at that precise moment this person, who ordinarily spends his time in the garden, was inside his house or calling on a neighbour. Mistakes in time therefore are comparatively frequent and

simultaneity between action and vision comparatively rare. In short, the habitual often masks the accidental action. This, I insist, is a point of which we must not lose sight, lest we ask of psychometry more than it is obviously able to give us.

2

Having said so much, is it open to us, amid all the mental anguish and suffering which this terrible war has engendered, without profaning the sorrow of our fellow-men and women, to give to those who are in mortal fear as to the fate of some one whom they love the hope of finding, among those extrahuman phenomena which have been unjustly and falsely disparaged, a consoling gleam of light that shall not be a mere mockery or delusion? I venture to declare—and I am doing so not thoughtlessly, but after studying the problem with the conscientious attention which it de-

mands and after personally making a number of experiments or causing them to be made under my supervision—I venture to declare, without for a moment losing sight of the respect due to grief, that we possess here, in these indisputable cases where no normal mode of communication is possible, a strange but real and serious source of information and comfort. I could mention a large number of tests that have been made, so to speak, before my eyes by absolutely trustworthy relatives or friends.

As my space is limited, I will relate only one, which typifies and summarizes all the others very fairly. A mother had three sons at the front. She was hearing pretty regularly from the eldest and the second; but for some weeks the youngest, who was in the Belgian trenches, where the fighting was very fierce, had given no sign of life. Wild with anxiety, she was

already mourning him as dead when her friends advised her to consult Mme. M. The medium consoled her with the first words that she spoke and told her that she saw her son wounded, but in no danger whatever, that he was in a sort of shed fitted up as a hospital, that he was being very well looked after by people who spoke a different language, that for the time being he was unable to write, which was a great worry to him, but that she would receive a letter from him in a few days. The mother did, in fact, receive a card from this son a few days later, worded a little stiffly and curtly and written in an unnatural hand, telling her that all was well and that he was in good health. Greatly relieved, she dismissed the matter from her mind, merely said to herself that of course the medium, like all mediums, had been wrong and thought no more of it. But two or three messages following on the

first, all couched in short, stilted phrases that seemed to be hiding something, ended by alarming her so much that she was unable to bear the strain any longer and entreated her son to tell her the whole truth, whatever it might be. He then admitted that he had been wounded, though not seriously, adding that he was in a sort of shed fitted up as a hospital, where he was being capitally looked after by English doctors and nurses, in short, just as the medium had seen him.

I repeat, mediumistic experience can show other instances of this kind. If it stood alone, it would be valueless, for it might well be explained by mere coincidence. But it forms part of a very normal series; and I could easily enumerate many others within my own knowledge. This, however, would merely mean repeating, with uninteresting variations, the essential

features of the present case, a proceeding for which there would be no excuse save in a technical work.

Is success then practically certain? Yes, rash and surprising though the statement may seem, mistakes upon the whole are very rare, provided that the medium be carefully chosen and that the object serving as an intermediary have not passed through too many hands, for it will contain and reveal as many distinct personalities as it has undergone contacts. It will be necessary, therefore, first to eliminate all these accessory personalities, so as to fix the medium's attention solely on the subject of the consultation. On the other hand, we must beware of calling for details which the nature of the medium's vision does not allow her to give us. If asked, for instance, about a soldier who is a prisoner in Germany, she will see the soldier in question very plainly, will perceive his state of

health and mind, the manner in which he is treated, his companions, the fortress or group of huts in which he is interned, the appearance of the camp, of the town, of the surrounding district; but she will very seldom indeed be able to mention the name of the camp, town or district. In fact, she can describe only what she sees; and, unless the town or camp have a board bearing its name, there will be nothing to enable her to identify it with sufficient accuracy. Let us add, lastly, that, with mediums in a state of trance, who are not conscious of what they are saying, we are exposed to terrible shocks. If they see death, they announce the fact bluntly, without suspecting that they are in the presence of a horror-stricken mother, wife or sister, so much so that, in the case of Mme. M. particularly, it has been found necessary to take certain precautions to obviate any such shock.

3

Now what is the nature of this strange and incredible faculty? In the book which I mentioned at the beginning of this article, I tried to examine the different theories that suggested themselves. The argument, unfortunately, is infinitely too long to be republished here, even if I were to compress it ruthlessly. I will give merely a brief summary of the conclusions, or rather of the attempted conclusions, for the mystery, like most of the world's mysteries, is probably unfathomable. After dismissing the spiritualistic theory, which implies the intervention of the dead or of discarnate entities and is not as ridiculous as the profane would think, but which nothing hitherto has adequately confirmed, we may reasonably ask ourselves first of all whether this faculty exists in us or in the medium. Does it simply decipher, as is probably the case where the future is concerned, the latent

ideas, knowledge and certainties which we bear within us, or does it alone, of its own initiative and independently of us, perceive what it reveals to us? Experience seems to show that we must adopt the latter hypothesis, for the vision appears just as distinctly when the illuminating object is brought by a third person who knows nothing and has never heard of the individual to whom the object once belonged. It seems therefore almost certain that the strange virtue is contained solely in the object itself, which is somehow galvanized by a complementary virtue in the medium. This being so, we must presume that the object, having absorbed like a sponge a portion of the spirit of the person who touched it, remains in constant communication with him, or, more probably, that it serves to track out, among the prodigious throng of human beings, the one who impregnated it with his fluid, even as the dogs

employed by the police—at least so we are told—when given an article of clothing to smell, are able to distinguish, among innumerable cross-trails, that of the man who used to wear the garment in question. It seems more and more certain that, as cells of one vast organism, we are connected with everything that exists by an infinitely intricate network of waves, vibrations, influences, currents and fluids, all nameless, numberless and unbroken. Nearly always, in nearly all men, everything transmitted by these invisible threads falls into the depths of the subconsciousness and passes unperceived, which is not the same as saying that it remains inactive. But sometimes an exceptional circumstance, such as, in the present case, the marvellous sensibility of a first-rate medium, suddenly reveals to us the existence of the infinite living network by the vibrations and the undeniable operation of one of its threads.

Supernatural Communications

All this, I agree, sounds incredible, but really it is hardly any more so than the wonders of radioactivity, of the Hertzian waves, of photography, electricity or hypnotism, or of generation, which condenses into a single particle all the physical, moral and intellectual past and future of thousands of creatures. Our life would be reduced to something very small indeed if we deliberately dismissed from it all that our understanding is unable to embrace.

EDITH CAVELL

XVII

EDITH CAVELL[1]

I

TO-DAY, in honouring the memory of Miss Edith Cavell, we honour not only the heroine who fell in the midst of her labours of love and piety, we honour also those, wherever they may be, who have accomplished or will yet accomplish the same sacrifice and who are ready, in like circumstances, to face a like death.

We are told by Thucydides that the Athenians of the age of Pericles—who, to the honour of humanity be it said, had nothing in common with the Athenians of to-day—were accustomed, each winter during their great war, to celebrate at the cost of the State the obsequies of those who had

[1] Delivered in Paris, at the Trocadéro, 18 December, 1915.

perished in the recent campaign. The bones of the dead, arranged according to their tribes, were exhibited under a tent and honoured for three days. In the midst of this host of the known dead stood an empty bed, covered with tapestry and dedicated to "the Invisible," that is, to those whose bodies it had been impossible to recover. Let us too, before all else, in the quiet of this hall, where none but almost religious words may be heard, raise in our midst such an altar, a sacred and mysterious altar, to the invisible heroines of this war, that is to say, to all those who have died an obscure death and have left no traces and also to those who are yet living, whose sacrifices and sufferings will never be told. Here, with the eyes of the spirit, let us gaze upon all the heroic deeds of which we know; but let us reserve an honoured place for those, incomparably more numerous and perhaps more beautiful, of

which we as yet know nothing and, above all, for those of which we shall never know, for glory has its injustices even as death has its fatalities.

2

Yet it is hardly probable that among these sacrifices we shall discern any more admirable than that of Miss Edith Cavell. I need not recall the circumstances of her death, for they are well-known to everybody and will never be forgotten. Destiny left nothing undone for the purest glory to emerge from the deepest shadow. In the depths of that shadow it concentrated all imaginable hatred, horror, villainy, cowardice and infamy, so that all pity, all innocent courage and mercy, all well-doing and all sweet charity might shine forth above it, as though to show us how low men may sink and how high a woman can rise, as though its express and visible intention had been to trace, with a

single gesture, amid all the sorrows and the rare beauties of this war, an outstanding and incomparable example which should at the same time be an immortal and consoling symbol.

3

And one would say that destiny had taken pains to make this symbol as truthful and as general as possible. It did not select a dazzling and warlike heroine, as it would have done in the days of old: a Judith, a Lucretia, nor even a Joan of Arc. There was no need of resounding words, of splendid raiment, of tragic attitudes and accessories, of an imposing background. The beauty which we find so touching has grown simpler; it makes less stir and wins closer to our heart. And this is why destiny sought out in obscurity a little hospital nurse, one of many thousands of others. The sight of her unpretentious portrait does not tell one whether she was rich or

poor, a humble member of the middle classes or a great lady. She would pass unnoticed anywhere until the hour of trial, when glory recognizes its elect; and it seems as though goodness had almost eliminated the individual contours of her face, so that it might the more closely resemble the pensive and sad smiling faces of all the good women in the world.

Beneath those features one might indeed have read the hidden devotion and quiet heroism of all the women who do their duty, that is, of those whom we see about us day by day, working, hoping, keeping vigil, solacing and succouring others, wearing themselves out without complaint, suffering in secret and mourning their dead in silence.

4

She passed like a flash of light which for one moment illumined that vast and in-

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4

She passed like a flash of light which for one moment illumined that vast and in-

numerable multitude, confirming our confidence and our admiration. She has added a final beauty to the great revelations of this war; for the war, which has taught us many things that will never fade from our memory, has above all revealed us to ourselves. In the first days of the terrible ordeal, we did not know for certain how men and women would comport themselves. In vain did we interrogate the past, hoping thereby to learn something of the future. There was no past that would serve for a comparison. Our eyes were drawn back to the present; and we closed them, full of uneasiness. In what condition should we find ourselves facing duty, sacrifice, suffering and death, after so many years of peace, well-being and pleasure, of heedlessness and moral indifference? What had been the vast and invisible journey of the human conscience and of those secret forces which are the

whole of man, during this long respite, when they had never been called upon to confront fate? Were they asleep, were they weakened or lost, would they respond to the call of destiny, or had they sunk so deep that they would never recover the energy to ascend to the surface of life? There was a moment of anguish and silence; and lo, suddenly, in the midst of this anguish and silence, the most splendid response, the most magnificent cry of resurrection, of righteousness, of heroism and sacrifice that the earth has ever heard since it began to roll along the paths of space and time! They were still there, the ideal forces! They were mounting upward, on every side, from the depths of all those swiftly-assembling souls, not merely intact but more than ever radiant, more than ever pure, more numerous and mightier than ever! To the amazement of all of us, who possessed them without knowing it,

they had increased in strength and stature while apparently neglected and forgotten.

To-day there is no longer any doubt. We may expect all things and hope all things from the men and the women who have surmounted this long and grievous trial. If the heroism displayed by man on the battlefield has never been comparable with that which is being lavished at this moment, we may also say of the women that their heroism is even more beyond comparison. We knew that a certain number of men were capable of giving their lives for their country, for their faith or for a generous ideal; but we did not realize that all would wrestle with death for endless months, in great unanimous masses; and above all we did not imagine, or perhaps we had to some extent forgotten, since the days of the great martyrs, that woman was ready with the same gift of self, the same patience, the same sacrifices,

the same greatness of soul and was about-less perhaps in blood than in tears, for it is always on her that sorrow ends by falling —to prove herself the rival and the peer of man.

THE LIFE OF THE DEAD

XVIII

THE LIFE OF THE DEAD

I

THE other day I went to see a woman whom I knew before the war—she was happy then—and who had lost her only son in one of the battles in the Argonne. She was a widow, almost a poor woman; and, now that this son, her pride and her joy, was no more, she no longer had any reason for living. I hesitated to knock at her door. Was I not about to witness one of those hopeless griefs at whose feet all words fall to the ground like shameful and insulting lies? Which of us to-day is not familiar with these mournful interviews, this dismal duty?

To my great astonishment, she offered me her hand with a kindly smile. Her

eyes, to which I hardly dared raise my own, were free of tears.

"You have come to speak to me of him," she said, in a cheerful tone; and it was as though her voice had grown younger.

"Alas, yes! I had heard of your sorrow; and I have come..."

"Yes, I too believed that my unhappiness was irreparable; but now I know that he is not dead."

"What! He is not dead? Do you mean that the news...? But I thought that the body..."

"Yes, his body is down there; and I have even a photograph of his grave. Let me show it to you. See, that cross on the left, the fourth cross: that is where they have laid him. One of his friends, who buried him, sent me this card, with all the details. He did not suffer any pain. There was not even a death-struggle. And he has told me so himself. He is quite astonished that

death should be so easy, so slight a thing. ...You do not understand? Yes, I see what it is: you are just as I used to be, as all the others are. I do not explain the matter to the others; what would be the use? They do not wish to understand. But you, you will understand. He is more alive than he ever was; he is free and happy. He does just as he likes. He tells me that one cannot imagine what a release death is, what a weight it removes from you, nor the joy which it brings. He comes to see me when I call him. He loves especially to come in the evening; and we chat as we used to do. He has not altered; he is just as he was on the day when he went away, only younger, stronger, handsomer. We have never been happier, or more united, or nearer to one another. He divines my thoughts before I utter them. He knows everything; he sees everything; but he cannot tell me every-

thing he knows. He says that I must be wanting to follow him and that I must wait for my hour. And, while I wait, we are living in happiness greater than that which was ours before the war, a happiness which nothing can ever trouble again. . . ."

Those about her pitied the poor woman; and, as she did not weep, as she was gay and smiling, they believed her mad.

2

Was she as mad as they thought? At the present moment, the great questions of the world beyond the grave are pressing upon us from every side. It is probable that, since the world began, there have never been so many dead as now. The empire of death was never so mighty, so terrible; it is for us to defend and enlarge the empire of life. In the presence of this mother, which are right or wrong, those

who are convinced that their dead are forever swept out of existence, or those who are persuaded that their dead do not cease to live, who believe that they see them and hear them? Do we know what it is that dies in our dead, or even if anything dies? Whatever our religious faith may be, there is at any rate one place where they cannot die. That place is within ourselves; and, if this unhappy mother went beyond the truth, she was yet nearer to it than those despairing ones who nourish the mournful certainty that nothing survives of those whom they loved. She felt too keenly what we do not feel keenly enough. She remembered too much; and we do not know how to remember. Between the two errors there is room for a great truth; and, if we have to choose, hers is the error towards which we should lean. Let us learn to acquire through reason that which a wise madness bestowed on her. Let us

learn from her to live with our dead and to live with them without sadness and without terror. They do not ask for tears, but for a happy and confident affection. Let us learn from her to resuscitate those whom we regret. She called to hers, while we repulse ours; we are afraid of them and are surprised that they lose heart and pale and fade away and leave us forever. They need love as much as do the living. Then die, not at the moment when they sink into the grave, but gradually as they sink into oblivion; and it is oblivion alone that makes the separation irrevocable. We should not allow it to heap itself above them. It would be enough to vouchsafe them each day a single one of those thoughts which we bestow uncounted upon so many useless objects: they would no longer think of leaving us; they would remain around us and we should no longer understand what a tomb is; for there is no tomb, how-

ever deep, whose stone may not be raised and whose dust dispersed by a thought.

There would be no difference between the living and the dead if we but knew how to remember. There would be no more dead. The best of what they were dwells with us after fate has taken them from us; all their past is ours; and it is wider than the present, more certain than the future. Material presence is not everything in this world; and we can dispense with it and yet not despair. We do not mourn those who live in lands which we shall never visit, because we know that it depends on us whether we go to find them. Let it be the same with our dead. Instead of believing that they have disappeared never to return, tell yourselves that they are in a country to which you yourself will assuredly go soon; a country not so very far away. And, while waiting for the time when you will go there once and for all,

you may visit them in thougnt as easily as if they were still in a region inhabited by the living. The memory of the dead is even more alive than that of the living; it is as though they were assisting our memory, as though they, on their side, were making a mysterious effort to join hands with us on ours. One feels that they are far more powerful than the absent who continue to breathe as we do.

3

Try then to recall those whom you have lost, before it is too late, before they have gone too far; and you will see that they will come much closer to your heart, that they will belong to you more truly, that they are as real as when they were in the flesh. In putting off this last, they have but discarded the moments in which they loved us least or in which we did not love at all. Now they are pure; they are

clothed only in the fairest hours of life; they no longer possess faults, littlenesses, oddities; they can no longer fall away, or deceive themselves, or give us pain. They care for nothing now but to smile upon us, to encompass us with love, to bring us a happiness drawn without stint from a past which they live again beside us.

THE WAR AND THE PROPHETS

XIX

THE WAR AND THE PROPHETS

AT the end of an essay occurring in *The Unknown Guest* and entitled, *The Knowledge of the Future*, in which I examined a certain number of phenomena relating to the anticipatory perception of events, such as presentiments, premonitions, precognitions, predictions, etc., I concluded in nearly the following terms:

"To sum up, if it is difficult for us to conceive that the future preexists, perhaps it is just as difficult for us to understand that it does not exist; moreover, many facts tend to prove that it is as real and definite and has, both in time and eternity, the same permanence and the same vividness as the past. Now, from the moment that it preexists, it is not surprising that

we snould be able to know it; it is even astonishing, granted that it overhangs us from every side, that we should not discover it oftener and more easily."

Above all is it astonishing and almost inconceivable that this universal war, the most stupendous catastrophe that has overwhelmed humanity since the origin of things, should not, while it was approaching, bearing in its womb innumerable woes which were about to affect almost every one of us, have thrown upon us more plainly, from the recesses of those days in which it was making ready, its menacing shadow. One would think that it ought to have overcast the whole horizon of the future, even as it will overcast the whole horizon of the past. A secret of such weight, suspended in time, ought surely to have weighed upon all our lives; and presentiments or revelations should

have arisen on every hand. There was none of these. We lived and moved without uneasiness beneath the disaster which, from year to year, from day to day, from hour to hour, was descending upon the world; and we perceived it only when it touched our heads. True, it was more or less foreseen by our reason; but our reason hardly believed in it; and besides I am not for the moment speaking of the inductions of the understanding, which are always uncertain and which are resigned beforehand to the capricious contradictions which they are accustomed daily to receive from facts.

2

But I repeat, beside or above these inductions of our everyday logic, in the less familiar domain of supernatural intuitions, of divination, prediction or prophecy properly so-called, we find that there was practically nothing to warn us of the vast peril.

This does not mean that there was any lack of predictions or prophecies collected after the event; these number, it appears, no fewer than eighty-three; but none of them, excepting those of Léon Sonrel and the Rector of Ars, which we will examine in a moment, is worthy of serious discussion. I shall therefore mention, by way of a reminder, only the most widely known; and, first of all, the famous prophecy of Mayence or Strasburg, which is supposed to have been discovered by a certain Jecker in an ancient convent founded near Mayence by St. Hildegard, of which the original text could not be found and of which no one until lately had ever heard. Then there is another prophecy of Mayence or Fiensberg, published in the *Neue Metaphysische Rundschau* of Berlin in February, 1912, in which the end of the German Empire is announced for the year 1913. Next, we have various predictions uttered by

Mme. de Thèbes, by Dom Bosco, by the Blessed Andrew Bobola, by Korzenicki, the Polish monk, by Tolstoy, by Brother Hermann and so on, which are even less interesting; and lastly the prophecy of "Brother Johannes," published by M. Joséphin Peladan in the *Figaro* of 16 September, 1914, which contains no evidence of genuineness and must therefore meanwhile be regarded merely as an ingenious literary conceit.

2

All these, on examination, leave but a worthless residuum; but the prophecies of the Rector of Ars and of Léon Sonrel are more curious and worthy of a moment's attention.

Father Jean-Baptiste Vianney, Rector of Ars, was, as everybody knows, a very saintly priest, who appears to have been endowed with extraordinary me-

diumistic faculties. The prophecy in question was made public in 1862, three years after the miracle-worker's death, and was confirmed by a letter which Mgr. Perriet addressed to the Very Rev. Dom Gréa on the 24th of February, 1908. Moreover, it was printed, as far back as 1872, in a collection entitled, *Voix prophétiques, ou signes, apparitions et prédictions modernes.* It therefore has an incontestable date. I pass over the part relating to the war of 1870, which does not offer the same safeguards; but I give that which concerns the present war, quoting from the 1872 text:

"The enemies will not go altogether; they will return again and destroy everything upon their passage; we shall not resist them, but will allow them to advance; and after that we shall cut off their provisions and make them suffer great losses. They will retreat towards their country;

we shall follow them and there will be hardly any who return home. Then we shall take back all that they took from us and much more."

As for the date of the event, it is stated definitely and rather strikingly in these words:

"They will want to canonize me, but there will not be time."

Now the preliminaries to the canonization of Father Vianney were begun in July, 1914, but abandoned because of the war.

I now come to the Sonrel prediction. I will summarize it as briefly as possible from the admirable article which M. de Vesme devoted to it in the *Annales des sciences psychiques*.[1]

On the 3rd of June, 1914—observe the date—Professor Charles Richet handed M. de Vesme, from Dr. Amédée Tardieu, a

[1]August, September and October, 1915.

manuscript of which the following is the substance: on the 23rd or 24th of July, 1869, Dr. Tardieu was strolling in the gardens of the Luxembourg with his friend Léon Sonrel, a former pupil of the Higher Normal School and teacher of natural philosophy at the Paris Observatory, when the latter had a kind of vision in the course of which he predicted various precise and actual episodes of the war of 1870, such as the collection on behalf of the wounded at the moment of departure and the amount of the sum collected in the soldiers' képis; incidents of the journey to the frontier; the battle of Sedan, the rout of the French, the civil war, the siege of Paris, his own death, the birth of a posthumous child, the doctor's political career and so on: predictions all of which were verified, as is attested by numerous witnesses who are worthy of the fullest credence. But I will pass over this part of the story and con-

sider only that portion which refers to the present war:

"I have been waiting for two years," to quote the text of Dr. Tardieu's manuscript of the 3rd of June, "for the sequel of the prediction which you are about to read. I omit everything that concerns my friend Léon's family and my private affairs. Yet there is in my life at this moment a personal matter, which, as always happens, agrees too closely with general occurrences for me to doubt what follows:

"'O my God! My country is lost: France is dead!... What a disaster!... Ah, see, she is saved! She extends to the Rhine! O France, O my beloved country, you are triumphant; you are the queen of nations!... Your genius shines forth over the world. . . . All the earth wonders at you. . . .'"

These are the words contained in the document written at the Mont-Doré on the 3rd and handed to M. de Vesme on the 13th of June 1914, at a moment when no one was thinking of the terrible war which to-day is ravaging half the world.

When questioned, after the declaration of war, by M. de Vesme on the subject of the prophetic phrase, "I have been waiting for two years for the sequel of the prediction which you are about to read," Dr. Tardieu replied, on the 12th of August:

"I have been waiting for two years; and I will tell you why. My friend Léon did not name the year, but the more general events are described simultaneously with the events of my own life. Now the events which concern me privately and which were doubtful two years ago became certain in April or May last. My friends

know that since May last I have been announcing war as due before September, basing my prediction on coincidences with events in my private life of which I do not speak."

4

These, up to the present, are the only prophecies known to us that deserve any particular attention. The prediction in both is timid and laconic; but, in those regions where the least gleam of light assumes extraordinary importance, it is not to be neglected. I admit, for the rest, that there has so far been no time to carry out a serious enquiry on this point, but I should be greatly surprised if any such enquiry gave positive results and if it did not allowed us to state that the gigantic event, as a whole, as a general event, was neither foreseen nor divined. On the other hand, we shall probably learn, when the enquiry is

completed, that hundreds of deaths, accidents, wounds and cases of individual ruin and misfortune, included in the great disaster, were predicted by clairvoyants, by mediums, by dreams and by every other manner of premonition with a definiteness sufficient to eliminate any kind of doubt. I have said elsewhere what I think of individual predictions of this kind, which seem to be no more than the reading of the presentiments which we carry within us, presentiments which themselves, in the majority of cases, are but the perception, by the as yet imperfectly known senses of our subconsciousness, of events, in course of formation or in process of realization, which escape the attention of our understanding. However, it would still remain to be explained how a wholly accidental death or wound could be perceived by these subliminal senses as an event in course of formation. In any case, it would once more be con-

firmed, after this great test, that the knowledge of the future, so soon as it ceases to refer to a strictly personal fact and one, moreover, not at all remote, is always illusory, or rather impossible.

Apart then from these strictly personal cases, which for the moment we will agree to set aside, it appears more than ever certain that there is no communication between ourselves and the vast store of events which have not yet occurred and which nevertheless seem already to exist at some place where they await the hour to advance upon us, or rather the moment when we shall pass before them. As for the exceptional and precarious infiltrations which belong not merely to the present that is still unknown, veiled or disguised, but really to the future, apart from the two which we have just examined, which are inconclusive, I for my part know of but four or five that appear to be rigorously verified; and

these I have discussed in the essay already mentioned. For that matter, they have no bearing upon the present war. They are, when all is said, so exceptional that they do not prove much; at the most, they seem to confirm the idea that a store exists filled with future events as real, as distinct and as immutable as those of the past; and they allow us to hope that there are paths leading thither which as yet we do not know, but which it will not be for ever impossible to discover.

THE WILL OF EARTH

XX

THE WILL OF EARTH

I

TO-DAY'S conflict is but a revival of that which has not ceased to drench the west of Europe in blood since the historical birth of the continent. The two chief episodes in the conflict, as we all know, are the invasion of Roman Gaul, including the north of Italy, by the Franks and the successive conquests of England by the Anglo-Saxons and the Normans. Without delaying to consider questions of race, which are complex, uncertain and always open to discussion, we may, regarding the matter from another aspect, perceive in the persistency and the bitterness of this conflict the clash of two wills, of which one or the other succumbs for a moment, only to rise up again with increased energy and

obstinacy. On the one hand is the will of earth or nature, which, in the human species as in all others, openly favours brute or physical force; and on the other hand is the will of humanity, or at least of a portion of humanity, which seeks to establish the empire of other more subtle and less animal forces. It is incontestable that hitherto the former has always won the day. But it is equally incontestable that its victory has always been only apparent and of brief duration. It has regularly suffered defeat in its very triumph. Gaul, invaded and overrun, presently absorbs her victor, even as England little by little transforms her conquerors. On the morrow of victory, the instruments of the will of earth turn upon her and arm the hand of the vanquished. It is probable that the same phenomenon would recur once more to-day, were events to follow the course prescribed by destiny. Germany,

after crushing and enslaving the greater part of Europe, after driving her back and burdening her with innumerable woes, would end by turning against the will which she represents; and that will, which until to-day had always found in this race a docile tool and its favourite accomplices, would be forced to seek these elsewhere, a task less easy than of old.

2

But now, to the amazement of all those who will one day consider them in cold blood, events are suddenly ascending the irresistible current and, for the first time since we have been in a position to observe it, the adverse will is encountering an unexpected and insurmountable resistance. If this resistance, as we can now no longer doubt, maintains itself victoriously to the end, there will never perhaps have been such a sudden change in the history of man-

kind; for man will have gained, over the will of earth or nature or fatality, a triumph infinitely more significant, more heavily fraught with consequences and perhaps more decisive than all those which, in other provinces, appear to have crowned his efforts more brilliantly.

Let us not then be surprised that this resistance should be stupendous, or that it should be prolonged beyond anything that our experience of wars has taught us to expect. It was our prompt and easy defeat that was written in the annals of destiny. We had against us all the force accumulated since the birth of Europe. We have to set history revolving in the reverse direction. We are on the point of succeeding; and, if it be true that intelligent beings watch us from the vantage-point of other worlds, they will assuredly witness the most curious spectacle that our planet has offered them since they discovered it

amid the dust of stars that glitters in space around it. They must be telling themselves in amazement that the ancient and fundamental laws of earth are suddenly being transgressed.

3

Suddenly? That is going too far. This transgression of a lower law, which was no longer of the stature of mankind, had been preparing for a very long time; but it was within an ace of being hideously punished. It succeeded only by the aid of a part of those who formerly swelled the great wave which they are to-day resisting by our side, as though something in the history of the world or the plans of destiny had altered, or rather as though we ourselves had at last succeeded in altering that something and in modifying laws to which until this day we were wholly subject.

But it must not be thought that the con-

flict will end with the victory. The deep-seated forces of earth will not be at once disarmed; for a long time to come the invisible war will be waged under the reign of peace. If we are not careful, victory may even be more disastrous to us than defeat. For defeat, indeed, like previous defeats, would have been merely a victory postponed. It would have absorbed, exhausted, dispersed the enemy, by scattering him about the world, whereas our victory will bring upon us a twofold peril. It will leave the enemy in a state of savage isolation in which, thrown back upon himself, cramped, purified by misfortune and poverty, he will secretly reinforce his formidable virtues, while we, for our part, no longer held in check by his unbearable but salutary menace, will give rein to failings and vices which sooner or later will place us at his mercy. Before thinking of peace, then, we must make sure of the future and

render it powerless to injure us. We cannot take too many precautions, for we are setting ourselves against the manifest desire of the power that bears us.

This is why our efforts are difficult and worthy of praise. We are setting ourselves—we cannot too often repeat it—against the will of earth. Our enemies are urged forward by a force that drives us back. They are marching with nature, whereas we are striving against the great current that sweeps the globe. The earth has an idea, which is no longer ours. She remains convinced that man is an animal in all things like other animals. She has not yet observed that he is withdrawing himself from the herd. She does not yet know that he has climbed her highest mountain-peaks. She has not yet heard tell of justice, pity, loyalty and honour; she does not realize what they are, or confounds them with weakness, clumsiness, fear and stu-

pidity. She has stopped short at the original certitudes which were indispensable to the beginnings of life. She is lagging behind us; and the interval that divides us is rapidly increasing. She thinks less quickly; she has not yet had time to understand us. Moreover, she does not reckon as we do; and for her the centuries are less than our years. She is slow because she is almost eternal, while we are prompt because we have not many hours before us. It may be that one day her thought will overtake ours; in the meantime, we have to vindicate our advance and to prove to ourselves, as we are beginning to do, that it is lawful to be in the right as against her, that our advance is not fatal and that it is possible to maintain it.

4

For it is becoming difficult to argue that earth or nature is always right and that

those who do not blindly follow earth's impulse are necessarily doomed to perish. We have learnt to observe her more attentively and we have won the right to judge her. We have discovered that, far from being infallible, she is continually making mistakes. She gropes and hesitates. She does not know precisely what she wants. She begins by making stupendous blunders. She first peoples the world with uncouth and incoherent monsters, not one of which is capable of living; these all disappear. Gradually she acquires, at the cost of the life which she creates, an experience that is the cruel fruit of the immeasurable suffering which she unfeelingly inflicts. At last she grows wiser, curbs and amends herself, corrects herself, returns upon her footsteps, repairs her errors, expending her best energies and her highest intelligence upon the correction. It is incontestable that she is improving her me-

thods, that she is more skillful, more prudent, less extravagant than at the outset. And yet the fact remains that, in every department of life, in every organism, down to our own bodies, there is a survival of bad workmanship, of twofold functions, of oversights, changes of intention, absurdities, useless complications and meaningless waste. We therefore have no reason to believe that our enemies are in the right because earth is with them. Earth does not possess the truth any more than we do. She seeks it, even as we do, and discovers it no more readily. She seems to know no more than we whither she is going nor whither she is being led by that which leads all things. We must not listen to her without enquiry; and we need not distress ourselves or despair because we are not of her opinion. We are not dealing with an infallible and unchangeable wisdom, to oppose which in our

thoughts would be madness. We are actually proving to her that it is she who is in the wrong; that man's reason for existence is loftier than that which she provisionally assigned to him; that he is already outstripping all that she foresaw; and that she does wrong to delay his advance. She is, for that matter, full of goodwill, is able on occasion to recognize her mistakes and to obviate their disastrous results and by no means takes refuge in majestic and inflexible self-conceit. If we are able to persevere, we shall be able to convince her. This will take much time, for, I repeat, she is slow, though in no wise obstinate. It will take much time because a very long future is in question, a very great change and the most important victory that man has ever hoped to win.

FOR POLAND

XXI

FOR POLAND

I

THE Allies have entered into a solemn compact that none of them will conclude a separate peace. They undertook recently, by an equally irrevocable convention, that they would not lay down their arms until Belgium was delivered. These two acts, one of prudence, the other of elementary justice, appear at first sight superfluous. Yet they were necessary. It is well that nations, even more than men, because their conscience is less stable, should secure themselves against the mistakes and weakness and ingratitude which too often accompany strife and which even more often follow victory. To-morrow they will do for Servia what they have done in the case of Belgium; but there is

a third victim, of whom too little is said, who has the same rights as the other two; and to forget her would forever attaint the honour and the justice of those who took up arms only in the name of justice and honour.

2

I need not recall the fate of Poland. It is in certain respects more tragic and more pitiful than that of Belgium or of Servia. She had not even the opportunity to choose between dishonour and annihilation.

Three successive acts of injustice, which were, until to-day, the most shameful recorded by history, deprived her of the glory of that heroic choice which she would have made in the same spirit, for she had already thrice made it in the past, a choice which this day sustains and consoles her two martyred sisters in their profoundest tribulations. It would be too unjust if an ancient injustice, which even yet weighs

upon the memory and the conscience of Europe, should become the sole reason of yet a last iniquity, which this time would be inexpiable.

3

True, the Grand-duke Nicolas made noble and generous promises to Poland; and these promises were repeated at the opening of the Duma. This is good and shows the irresistible force of the awakening conscience of a great empire; but it is not enough. Such promises involve only those who make them; they do not bind a nation. We will not insult Russia by doubting her intentions; but among all the certainties which history teaches us there is one that has been acquired once and for all; and this is that in politics and international morality intentions count for nothing and that a promise, made by no matter what nations, will be kept only if those who make it also render it impossible for

themselves to do otherwise than keep it. For the rest, the question at present is not one of intentions, nor confidence, nor pity, nor even of interest. Others have spoken and will speak again, better than I could, of Poland's terrible distress and of the danger, which is far more formidable and far more imminent than is generally believed, of those German intrigues which are seeking to seduce from us and, despite themselves, to turn against us twenty millions of desperate people and nearly a million soldiers, who will die, perhaps, rather than join our enemies, but who, in any case, cannot fight in our ranks as they would have done had the word for which they are waiting in their anguish been spoken before it was too late.

4

But, however grave the peril, we are, I repeat, far less concerned with this at the

present moment than with the question of justice. Poland has an absolute and sacred right to be treated even as the other two victims of this war of justice. She is their equal, she is of the same rank and on the same level. She has suffered what they have suffered, for the same cause, in the same spirit and with the same heroism; and if she has not done what the two others have done it is because only the ingratitude of all those whom she had more than once saved, together with one of the greatest crimes in history, prevented her from doing so.

It is time for the Europe of to-day to repair the iniquity committed by the Europe of other days. We are nothing, we are no better than our enemies, we have no title to deliver millions of innocent men to death, unless we stand for justice. The idea of justice alone must rule all that we undertake, for we are united, we have risen

and we exist only in its name. At this moment we occupy all the pinnacles of this justice, to which we have brought such an impulse, such sacrifices and such heroism as we shall perhaps never behold again. We shall never rise higher; let us then form at this present time resolutions which will forbid us to descend; and Europe would descend, to a depth greater than was hers in the unpardonable hour of the partition of Poland, did she not before all else repair the immense fault which she committed when she had not yet discovered her conscience and did not yet know what she knows to-day.

THE MIGHT OF THE DEAD

XXII

THE MIGHT OF THE DEAD

I.

IN *A Beleaguered City,* a little book which, in its curious way, is a masterpiece, Mrs. Oliphant shows us the dead of a provincial town suddenly waxing indignant over the conduct and the morals of those inhabiting the town which they had founded. They rise up in rebellion, invest the houses, the streets, the market-places and, by the pressure of their innumerable multitude, all-powerful though invisible, repulse the living, thrust them out of doors and, setting a strict watch, permit them to return to their roof-trees only after a treaty of peace and penitence has purified their

hearts, atoned for their offences and ensured a more worthy future.

There is undoubtedly a great truth beneath this fiction, which appears too far-fetched because we perceive only material and ephemeral realities. The dead live and move in our midst far more really and effectually than the most venturesome imagination could depict. It is very doubtful whether they remain in their graves. It even seems increasingly certain that they never allowed themselves to be confined there. Under the tombstones where we believe them to lie imprisoned there are only a few ashes, which are no longer theirs, which they have abandoned without regret and which, in all probability, they no longer deign to remember. All that was themselves continues to have its being in our midst. How and under what aspect? After all these thousands, perhaps millions, of years, we do not yet know; and no

religion has been able to tell us with satisfying certainty, though all have striven to do so; but we may, by means of certain tokens, hope to learn.

Without further considering a mighty but obscure truth, which it is for the moment impossible to state precisely or to render palpable, let us concern ourselves with one which cannot be disputed. As I have said elsewhere, whatever our religious faith may be, there is in any case one place where our dead cannot perish, where they continue to exist as really as when they were in the flesh and often more actively; and this living abiding-place, this consecrated spot, which for those whom we have lost becomes heaven or hell according as we draw close to or depart from their thoughts and their desires, is in us.

And their thoughts and their desires are always higher than our own. It is, therefore, by uplifting ourselves that we

approach them. It is we who must take the first steps, for they can no longer descend, whereas it is always possible for us to rise; for the dead, whatever they have been in life, become better than the best of us. The least worthy of them, in shedding the body, have shed its vices, its littlenesses, its weaknesses, which soon pass from our memory as well; and the spirit alone remains, which is pure in every man and able to desire only what is good. There are no wicked dead because there are no wicked souls. This is why, as we purify ourselves, we restore life to those who were no more and transform our memory, which they inhabit, into heaven.

2.

And what was always true of all the dead is far more true to-day when only the best are chosen for the tomb. In the region which we believe to be under the earth,

which we call the kingdom of the shades and which in reality is the ethereal region and the kingdom of light, there are at this moment perturbations no less profound than those which we are experiencing on the surface of our earth. The young dead are invading it from every side; and since the beginning of this world they have never been so numerous, so full of energy and zeal. Whereas in the customary sequence of the years the dwelling-place of those who leave us receives only weary and exhausted lives, there is not one in this incomparable host who, to borrow Pericles' expression, "has not departed from life at the height of glory." Not one of them but has gone up, not down, to his death clad in the greatest sacrifice that man can make for an idea which cannot die. All that we have hitherto believed, all that we have striven to attain beyond ourselves, all that has lifted us to the level at which we

stand, all that has overcome the evil days and the evil instincts of human nature: all this could have been no more than lies and illusions if such men as these, such a mass of merit and of glory, were really annihilated, had really forever disappeared, were forever useless and voiceless, forever without influence in a world to which they have given life.

3.

It is hardly possible that this could be so as regards the external survival of the dead; but it is absolutely certain that it is not so as regards their survival in ourselves. Here nothing is lost and no one perishes. Our memories are to-day peopled by a multitude of heroes struck down in the flower of their youth and very different from the pale and languid cohort of the past, composed almost wholly of the sick and the aged, who already had ceased to

exist before leaving the earth. We must tell ourselves that now, in each of our homes, both in our cities and in the country-side, both in the palace and in the meanest hovel, there lives and reigns a young dead man in the glory of his strength. He fills the poorest, darkest dwelling with a splendour of which it had never ventured to dream. His constant presence, imperious and inevitable, diffuses through it and maintains a religion and ideas which it had never known there before, hallows everything around it, forces the eyes to look higher and the spirit to refrain from descending, purifies the air that is breathed and the speech that is held and the thoughts that are mustered there and, little by little, ennobles and uplifts a whole people on a scale of unexampled vastness.

4.

Such dead as these have a power as

profound, as fruitful as life and less precarious. It is terrible that this experience should have been made, for it is the most pitiless and the first in such enormous masses that mankind has ever undergone; but, now that the ordeal is almost over, we shall soon derive from it the most unexpected fruits. It will not be long before we see the differences increase and the destinies diverge between the nations which have acquired all these dead and all this glory and those which were deprived of them; and we shall perceive with amazement that those nations which have lost the most are those which have kept their riches and their men. There are losses which are inestimable gains; and there are gains whereby the future is lost. There are dead whom the living cannot replace and the mere thought of whom accomplishes things which their bodies could not perform. There are dead whose energy surpasses

death and recovers life; and we are almost every one of us at this moment the mandataries of a being greater, nobler, graver, wiser and more truly living than ourselves. With all those who accompany him, he will be our judge, if it is the fact that the dead weigh the soul of the living and that on their verdict our happiness depends. He will be our guide and our protector, for it is the first time, since history has revealed its misfortunes to us, that man has felt so great a host of such mighty dead soaring above his head and speaking within his heart.

5.

We shall live henceforward under their laws, which will be more just but not more severe nor more cheerless than ours; for it is a mistake to suppose that the dead love nothing but gloom; they love only the justice and the truth which are the eternal

forms of happiness. From the depths of this justice and this truth in which they are all immersed, they will help us to destroy the great falsehoods of existence: for war and death, if they sow innumerable miseries and misfortunes, have at least the merit of destroying as many lies as they occasion evils. And all the sacrifices which they have made for us will have been in vain—and this is not possible—if they do not first of all bring about the fall of the lies on which we live and which it is not necessary to name, for each of us knows his own and is ashamed of them and will be eager to make an end of them. They will teach us, before all else, from the depths of our hearts which are their living tombs, to love those who outlive them, since it is in them alone that they wholly exist.

WHEN THE WAR IS OVER

XXIII

WHEN THE WAR IS OVER

I

BEFORE closing this book, I wish to weigh for the last time in my conscience the words of hatred and malediction which it has made me speak in spite of myself. We have to do with the strangest of enemies. He has knowingly and deliberately, while in the full possession of his faculties and without necessity or excuse, revived all the crimes which we supposed to be forever buried in the barbarous past. He has trampled under foot all the precepts which man had so painfully won from the cruel darkness of his beginnings; he has violated all the laws of justice, humanity, loyalty and honour, from the highest, which are almost godlike, to the simplest, the most elementary, which

still belong to the lower worlds. There is no longer any doubt on this point: it has been proved over and over again until we have attained a final certitude.

But on the other hand, it is no less certain that he has displayed virtues which it would be unworthy of us to deny; for we honour ourselves in recognizing the valour of those whom we are fighting. He has gone to his death in deep, compact, disciplined masses, with a blind, hopeless, obstinate heroism of which no such lurid example had ever yet been known, a heroism which has many times compelled our admiration and our pity. He has known how to sacrifice himself, with unprecedented and perhaps unequalled abnegation, to an idea which we know to be false, inhuman and even somewhat mean, but which he believes to be just and lofty; and a sacrifice of this kind, whatever its object, is always the proof of a force which survives

those who devote themselves to making it and must command respect.

I know very well that this heroism is not like the heroism which we love. For us, heroism must before all be voluntary, freed from any constraint, active, ardent, eager and spontaneous; whereas with them it has mingled with it a great deal of servility, passiveness, sadness, gloomy, ignorant, massive submission and rather base fears. It is nevertheless the fact that, in the moment of supreme peril, little remains of all these distinctions and that no force in the world can drive to its death a people which does not bear within itself the strength to confront it. Our soldiers make no mistake upon this point. Question the men returning from the trenches: they detest the enemy, they abhor the aggressor, the unjust and arrogant aggressor, uncouth, too often cruel and treacherous; but they do not hate the man: they do him justice;

they pity him; and, after the battle, in the defenceless wounded soldier or disarmed prisoner they recognize, with astonishment, a brother in misfortune who, like themselves, is submitting to duties and laws which, like themselves, he too believes lofty and necessary. Under the insufferable enemy they see an unhappy man who also is bearing the burden of life. They forget the things that divide them to recall only those which unite them in a common destiny; and they teach us a great lesson. Better than ourselves, who are removed from danger, at the contact of profound and fearful verities and realities they are already beginning to discern something that we cannot yet perceive; and their obscure instinct is probably anticipating the judgment of history and our own judgment, when we see more clearly. Let us learn from them to be just and to distinguish that which we are bound to despise and

loathe from that which we may pity, love and respect.

Setting aside the unpardonable aggression and the inexpiable violation of treaties, this war, despite its insanity, has come near to being a bloody but magnificent proof of greatness, heroism and the spirit of sacrifice. Humanity was ready to rise above itself, to surpass all that it had hitherto accomplished. It has surpassed it. Never before had nations been seen capable, for months on end, perhaps for years, of renouncing their repose, their security, their wealth, their comfort, all that they possessed and loved down to their very life, in order to accomplish what they believed to be their duty. Never before had nations been seen that were able as a whole to understand and admit that the happiness of each of those who live in this time of trial is of no consequence compared with the honour of those who live no more or the

happiness of those who are not yet alive. We stand on heights that had not been attained before. And if, on the enemies' side, this unexampled renunciation had not been poisoned at its source; if the war which they are waging against us had been as fine, as loyal, as generous, as chivalrous as that which we are waging against them, we may well believe that it would have been the last and that it would have ended, not in battle, but, like the awakening from an evil dream, in a noble and fraternal amazement. They have made that impossible; and this, we may be sure, is the disappointment which the future will find it most difficult to forgive them.

2

What are we to do now? Must we hate the enemy to the end of time? The burden of hatred is the heaviest that man can bear upon this earth; and we should faint under

the weight of it. On the other hand, we do not wish once more to be the dupes and victims of confidence and love. Here again our soldiers, in their simplicity, which is so clear-seeing and so close to the truth, anticipate the future and teach us what to admit and what to avoid. We have seen that they do not hate the man; but they do not trust him at all. They discover the human being in him only when he is unarmed. They know, from bitter experience, that, so long as he possesses weapons, he cannot resist the frenzy of destruction, treachery and slaughter; and that he does not become kindly until he is rendered powerless.

Is he thus by nature, or has he been perverted by those who lead him? Have the rulers dragged the whole nation after them, or has the whole nation driven its rulers on? Did the rulers make the nation like unto themselves, or did the nation

select and support them because they resembled itself? Did the evil come from above or below, or was it everywhere? Here we have the great and obscure point of this terrible adventure. It is not easy to throw light upon it and still less easy to find excuses for it. If our enemies prove that they were deceived and corrupted by their masters, they prove, at the same time, that they are less intelligent, less firmly attached to justice, honour and humanity, less civilized, in a word, than those whom they claimed the right to enslave in the name of a superiority which they themselves have proved not to exist; and, unless they can establish that their errors, perfidies and cruelties, which can no longer be denied, should be imputed only to those masters, then they themselves must bear the pitiless weight. I do not know how they will escape from this predicament, nor what the future will decide, that future

which is wiser than the past, even as, in the words of an old Slav proverb, the dawn is wiser than the eve. In the meanwhile, let us copy the prudence of our soldiers, who know what to believe far better than we do.

THE MASSACRE OF THE INNOCENTS

XXIV

THE MASSACRE OF THE INNOCENTS

The Massacre of the Innocents appeared for the first time in 1886, in a little periodical called *La Plêiade* which some friends and I had founded in the Latin Quarter and which died of inanition after its sixth number. My reason for making room in the present volume for these pages marking a very modest start—they were the first that found their way into print—is not that I am under any delusion as to the merits of this youthful work, in which I had simply aimed at reproducing as best I could the different episodes of a picture in the Brussels Museum, painted in the sixteenth century by Pieter Breughel the Elder. But it appeared to me that circumstances had made of this humble literary effort a sort of prophetic vision; for it is but too likely that similar scenes must have been repeated in more than one of our unhappy Flemish or Brabant villages and that to describe them as they were lately enacted we should have only to change the name of the butchers and probably, alas, to accentuate their cruelty, their injustice and their hideousness!—M. M.

IT WAS close upon supper-time, that Friday the twenty-sixth day of the month of December, when a little shepherd-lad came into Nazareth, sobbing bitterly.

Some peasants drinking ale in the Blue

Lion opened the shutters to look into the village orchard and observed the child running over the snow. They saw that he was Korneliz' boy and cried from the window:

"What's the matter? Get home with you to bed!"

But he replied in terror that the Spaniards were come, that they had set fire to the farm, hanged his mother among the walnut-trees and bound his nine little sisters to the trunk of a big tree.

The peasants rushed out of the inn, gathered round the child and plied him with questions. Then he also told them that the soldiers were on horseback and wore mail, that they had driven away the cattle of his uncle Petrus Krayer and that they would soon be entering the forest with the cows and sheep.

All ran to the Golden Sun, where Korneliz and his brother-in-law were also drinking their pot of ale; and the inn-keeper

sped into the village, shouting that the Spaniards were at hand.

Then there was a great din in Nazareth. The women opened the windows and the peasants left their houses with lights which they put out as soon as they reached the orchard, where it was bright as midday, because of the snow and the full moon.

They crowded round Korneliz and Krayer in the market-place, in front of the two inns. Several had brought their pitchforks and their rakes and consulted one another, terror-stricken, under the trees.

But, as they knew not what to do, one of them went to fetch the parish-priest, who owned Korneliz' farm. He came out of his house with the sacristan, bringing the keys of the church. All followed him into the churchyard; and he shouted to them from the top of the tower that he could see nothing in the fields nor in the

forest, but that there were red clouds in the neighbourhood of his farm, though the sky was blue and full of stars over all the rest of the country.

After deliberating for a long time in the churchyard, they decided to hide in the wood through which the Spaniards would have to pass and to attack them if they were not too many, so as to recover Petrus Krayer's cattle and the plunder which they had taken from the farm.

They armed themselves with pitchforks and spades; and the women remained near the church with the priest.

Seeking a suitable spot for their ambuscade, they came to a mill on the skirt of the forest and saw the farm burning amid the starlight. Here, under some huge oaks, in front of a frozen pool, they took up their position.

A shepherd whom they called the Red Dwarf went up the hill to warn the miller,

who had stopped his mill when he saw the flames on the horizon. He invited the fellow in, however; and the two of them placed themselves at a window to watch the distance.

In front of them the moon was shining over the burning farm; and they saw a long host marching over the snow. When they had taken stock of it, the Dwarf went down to those in the forest; and presently they descried four horsemen above a herd of animals that seemed to be cropping the grass.

As the men, in their blue hose and their red cloaks, were looking around them on the edge of the pool and under the snow-lit trees, the sacristan pointed to a box-hedge; and they went and hid behind it.

The cattle and the Spaniards came over the ice; and the sheep on reaching the hedge were already beginning to nibble at the leaves, when Korneliz broke through

the bushes; and the others followed with their pitchforks into the light. Then there was a great slaughter on the pond, while the huddled sheep and the cows gazed at the battle in their midst and at the moon above them.

When the men and the horses had been killed, Korneliz ran into the meadows towards the flames; and the others stripped the dead. Then they went back to the village with the herds. The women watching the gloomy forest from behind the walls of the churchyard saw them approaching through the trees and, with the priest, hurried to meet them; and they returned dancing gleefully all amongst the children and the dogs.

While they made merry under the pear-trees in the orchard, where the Red Dwarf hung up lanterns as a sign of kermis, they consulted the priest as to what they were to do.

They at last resolved to put a horse to a cart and fetch the bodies of the woman and her nine little daughters to the village. The dead woman's sisters and the other peasant-women of her family climbed into it, as did the priest, who was not well able to walk, being advanced in years and very stout.

They entered the forest once more and arrived in silence at the dazzling white plain, where they saw the naked men and the horses lying on their backs upon the gleaming ice among the trees. Then they went on to the farm, which they could see burning in the distance.

When they came to the orchard and to the house all red with flames, they stopped at the gate to mark the great misfortune that had befallen the farmer in his garden. His wife was hanging all naked from the branches of a great walnut-tree; he himself was mounting a ladder to climb the tree,

around which the nine little girls were waiting for their mother on the grass. Already he was walking among the huge boughs, when suddenly he saw the crowd, black against the snow, watching him. Weeping, he made signs to them to help him; and they went into the garden. Then the sacristan, the Red Dwarf, the landlord of the Blue Lion and he of the Golden Sun, the parish-priest, with a lantern, and many other peasants climbed into the snow-laden walnut-tree to cut down the corpse, which the women of the village received in their arms at the foot of the tree, even as at the descent from the Cross of Our Lord Jesus Christ.

The next day they buried her; and nothing else out of the common happened at Nazareth that week. But, on the following Sunday, hungry wolves ran through the village after high mass and it snowed until noon; then the sun suddenly shone in

the sky; and the peasants went in to dinner, as was their wont, and dressed for benediction.

At that moment there was no one in the market-place, for it was freezing cruelly. Only the dogs and hens remained under the trees, where some sheep were nibbling at a three-cornered patch of grass, while the priest's maid-servant swept away the snow from the presbytery-garden.

Then a troop of armed men crossed the stone bridge at the end of the village and halted in the orchard. Some peasants came out of their houses; but, on recognizing the Spaniards, they retreated in terror and went to their windows to see what would happen.

There were some thirty horsemen, clad in armour, around an old man with a white beard. Behind them they carried red and yellow foot-soldiers, who jumped down and ran over the snow to shake off their stiff-

ness, while several of the men in armour also alighted and eased themselves against the trees to which they had fastened their horses.

Then they turned to the Golden Sun and knocked at the door. It was opened hesitatingly; and they warmed themselves at the fire and called for ale.

Next they came out of the inn, carrying pots and jugs and wheaten loaves for their comrades, who sat ranked around the man with the white beard, waiting in the midst of the lances.

As the street was empty, the commander sent horsemen to the back of the houses, to guard the village on its open side, and ordered the foot-soldiers to bring to him all the children of two years old and under, to be massacred, as is written in the Gospel according to St. Matthew.

The soldiers went first to the inn of the Green Cabbage and to the barber's cottage,

which stood side by side, midway in the street.

One of them opened a stable-door; and a litter of pigs escaped and scattered over the village. The inn-keeper and the barber came out and humbly asked the soldiers what they wanted; but the men knew no Flemish and went in to look for the children.

The inn-keeper had one, which sat crying in its little shirt on the table where they had just had dinner. A man took the child in his arms and carried it away under the apple-tree, while the father and mother followed him with cries of lamentation.

The soldiers also threw open the cooper's shed and the blacksmith's and the cobbler's; and the calves, cows, asses, pigs, goats and sheep strayed about the market-place. When the men broke the glass of the carpenter's windows, several of the peasants, including the oldest and richest

farmers in the parish, assembled in the street and went towards the Spaniards. They doffed their hats and caps respectfully to the leader in his velvet cloak and asked him what he was going to do; but even he did not understand their language; and some one went to fetch the priest.

He was making ready for benediction and putting on a gold cope in the sacristy. The peasant called out:

"The Spaniards are in the orchard!"

Horrified, the priest ran to the church-door, accompanied by the serving-boys carrying tapers and censer.

Then he saw the animals released from their sheds roaming on the snow and the grass, the horsemen in the village, the soldiers outside the doors, the horses tied to the trees along the street and the men and women entreating him who was holding the child in its shirt.

He rushed to the churchyard; and the

peasants turned anxiously to their priest, coming through the pear-trees like a god robed in gold, and stood around him and the man with the white beard.

He spoke in Flemish and Latin; but the commander shrugged his shoulders slowly up and down to show that he did not understand.

His parishioners asked him under their breath:

"What does he say? What is he going to do?"

Others, on seeing the priest in the orchard, came timidly from their farms; the women hurried up and stood whispering among the groups; while some soldiers who were besieging an inn ran back at the sight of the great crowd that was forming in the market-place.

Then the man who was holding by one leg the child of the landlord of the Green Cabbage cut off its head with his sword.

The head fell before their eyes and the body fell after it and lay bleeding on the grass. The mother picked it up and carried it away, leaving the head behind her. She ran towards the house, but stumbled against a tree and fell flat on the snow, where she lay in a swoon, while the father struggled between two soldiers.

Some of the younger peasants threw stones and blocks of wood at the Spaniards, but the horsemen all lowered their lances together, the women fled and the priest began to cry out in horror with his parishioners, all among the sheep, the geese and the dogs.

However, as the soldiers were once more moving down the street, the folk stood silent to see what they would do.

The band entered the shop kept by the sacristan's sisters and then came out quietly, without harming the seven women, who knelt on the doorstep praying.

The Massacre of the Innocents

Next they went to the inn owned by the Hunchback of St. Nicholas. Here also the door was opened directly, to appease them; but they reappeared amid a great outcry, with three children in their arms and surrounded by the Hunchback, his wife and his daughters, clasping their hands in token of entreaty.

On reaching the old man, the soldiers put down the children at the foot of an elm, where they remained, sitting on the snow in their Sunday clothes. But one of them, who wore a yellow frock, rose and toddled towards the sheep. A man ran after it with his naked sword; and the child died with its face in the grass, while the others were killed not far from the tree.

All the peasants and the inn-keeper's daughters took to flight, shrieking as they went, and returned to their homes. The priest, left alone in the orchard, besought the Spaniards with loud cries, going on his

knees from horse to horse, with his arms crossed upon his breast, while the father and mother, sitting in the snow, wept piteously for the dead children that lay in their laps.

As the soldiers ran along the street, they remarked a big blue farm-house. They tried to break down the door, but it was of oak and studded with nails. Then they took some tubs that were frozen in a pool in front of the house and used them to climb to the upper windows, through which they made their way.

There had been a kermis at this farm; and kinsfolk had come to eat waffles, ham and custards with their family. At the sound of the broken panes, they had assembled behind the table covered with jugs and dishes. The soldiers entered the kitchen and, after a desperate struggle, in which many were wounded, they seized the little boys and girls, as well as the hind,

who had bitten a soldier's thumb. Then they left the house, locking the door behind them to prevent the inmates from going with them.

Those of the villagers who had no children slowly left their homes and followed them from afar. When the soldiers carrying their victims came to the old man, they threw them on the grass and deliberately killed them with their spears and their swords, while all along the front of the blue house the men and women leant out of the windows of the upper floor and the loft, cursing and rocking wildly in the sunshine at the sight of the red, pink and white frocks of their little ones lying motionless on the grass among the trees. Then the soldiers hanged the hind from the sign of the Half Moon on the other side of the street; and there was a long silence in the village.

The massacre now began to spread.

Mothers ran out of the houses and tried to escape to the open country through the gardens and kitchen-plots; but the horsemen scoured after them and drove them back into the street. Peasants, holding their caps in their clasped hands, followed upon their knees the men who were dragging away their children, among the dogs which barked deliriously amid the din. The priest, with his arms raised aloft, ran along the houses and under the trees, praying desperately, like a martyr; and soldiers, shivering with cold, blew on their fingers as they moved about the road, or, with their hands in the pockets of their trunks and their swords tucked under their arms, waited beneath the windows of the houses that were being scaled.

On seeing the grief-stricken terror of the peasants, they entered the farm-houses in little bands; and in like fashion they acted throughout the length of the street.

The Massacre of the Innocents

A woman who sold vegetables in the old red-brick cottage near the church seized a chair and ran after two men who were carrying off her children in a wheel-barrow. When she saw them die, a sickness overcame her; and she suffered the folk to press her into the chair, against a tree by the road-side.

Other soldiers climbed up the lime-trees in front of a house painted lilac and removed the tiles in order to enter the house. When they came out again upon the roof, the father and mother, with outstretched arms, also appeared in the opening; and they pushed them down repeatedly, cutting them over the head with their swords, before they could descend into the street.

One family, which had locked itself into the cellar of a rambling cottage, cried through the grating, where the father stood madly brandishing a pitchfork. An old, bald-headed man was sobbing all alone on

a dung-heap; a woman in yellow had fainted in the market-place and her husband was holding her under her arms and moaning in the shadow of a pear-tree; another, in red, was kissing her little girl, who had lost her hands, and lifting first one arm and then the other to see if she would not move. Yet another ran into the country and the soldiers pursued her through the hayricks that bounded the snow-clad fields.

Beneath the inn of the Four Sons of Aymon there was a tumult as of a siege. The inhabitants had barred the door; and the soldiers went round and round the house without being able to make their way in. They were trying to clamber up to the sign by the fruit-trees against the front wall, when they caught sight of a ladder behind the garden-door. They set it against the wall and mounted one after the other. Thereupon the landlord and all his house-

hold hurled tables, chairs, dishes and cradles at them from the windows. The ladder upset and the soldiers fell down.

In a wooden hut, at the end of the village, another band found a peasant-woman bathing her children in a tub by the fire. Being old and almost deaf, she did not hear them come in. Two soldiers took the tub and carried it off; and the dazed woman went after them, with the children's clothes, wanting to dress them. But, when she came to the door and suddenly saw the splashes of blood in the village, the swords in the orchard, the cradles overturned in the street, women on their knees and women waving their arms around the dead, she began to cry out with all her strength and to strike the soldiers, who put down the tub to defend themselves. The priest also came hastening up and, folding his hands across his vestment, entreated the Spaniards before the naked children,

who were whimpering in the water. Other soldiers then came up and pushed him aside and bound the raving peasant-woman to a tree.

The butcher had hidden his little daughter and, leaning against his house, looked on in unconcern. A foot-soldier and one of the men in armour went in and discovered the child in a copper cauldron. Then the butcher, in desperation, took one of his knives and chased them down the street; but a band that was passing struck the knife from his grasp and hanged him by the hands to the hooks in his wall, among the flayed carcases, where he twitched his legs and jerked his head and cursed and swore till evening.

Near the churchyard, a crowd had assembled outside a long green farm-house. The farmer stood on his threshold weeping bitter tears; as he was very fat, with a face made for smiling, the hearts of the

soldiers softened in some measure as they sat in the sun with their backs to the wall, listening to him and patting his dog the while. But the one who was dragging the child away by the hand made gestures as though to say:

"You may save your tears! It is not my fault!

A peasant who was being hotly pursued sprang into a boat moored to the stone bridge and pushed across the pond with his wife and children. The soldiers, not daring to venture on the ice, strode angrily through the reeds. They climbed into the willows on the bank, trying to reach them with their spears; and, when they failed, continued for a long time to threaten the family, where they all sat cowering in the middle of the water.

Meanwhile, the orchard was still full of people, for it was there that most of the children were slain, in front of the man with

the white beard who directed the massacre. The little boys and girls who were big enough to walk alone also collected there and, munching their bread-and-butter, stood looking on curiously to see the others die or gathered round the village idiot, who lay upon the grass playing a whistle.

Then suddenly a movement ran through the length of the village. The peasants were turning their steps toward the castle, standing on a high mound of yellow earth at the end of the street. They had caught sight of the lord of the village leaning on the battlements of his tower, watching the massacre. And the men, women and old folk stretched out their arms to him where he sat in his cloak of purple velvet and cap of gold and entreated him as though he were a king in heaven. But he threw up his arms and shrugged his shoulders, to show his helplessness; and, when they implored him in ever-increasing anguish and

knelt bareheaded in the snow, uttering loud cries, he turned back slowly into the tower; and in the hearts of the peasants all hope died.

When all the children were killed, the tired soldiers wiped their swords on the grass and supped under the pear-trees. Then the foot-soldiers mounted behind the others and they all rode out of Nazareth together, by the stone bridge, as they had come.

The setting sun lit the forest with a red light and painted the village a new colour. Weary with running and entreating, the priest had sat down in the snow in front of the church; and his servant-maid stood near him, looking around. They saw the street and the orchard filled with peasants in their holiday attire, moving about the market-place and along the houses. Outside the doors, families, with their dead children on their knees, whispered in amaze-

ment and horror of the fate wherewith they had been assailed. Others were still mourning the child where it had fallen, near a cask, under a barrow or at a puddle's edge, or were carrying it away in silence. Several were already washing the benches, chairs, tables and shirts all smirched with blood and picking up the cradles that had been flung into the street. But nearly all the mothers were kneeling on the grass under the trees, before the dead bodies, which they knew by their woollen frocks. Those who had no children were roaming about the market-place, stopping to gaze at the afflicted groups. The men who had done weeping took the dogs and started in pursuit of their strayed beasts, or mended their broken windows or gaping roofs, while the village grew hushed and still beneath the light of the moon as it rose slowly in the sky.

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